BUILDING AN ETHICAL MODEL FOR

MAKING DECISIONS

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Doctor of Religion

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by

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This dissertation, written by

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under the direction of <u>his</u> *Faculty Committee, and approved by its members, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

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There is a real need for humanity in ethical models. Joseph Fletcher has attempted to do this in his *Situation Ethics*, yet a major weakness is his one guide, love.

I have tried to objectively look at Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* and evaluate it. I have also looked at other ethical models. In developing my model, I have tried to take the strengths of Fletcher's model and other models to build an ethical model for decision making.

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF JOSEPH FLETCHER'S SITUATION ETHICS

Joseph Fletcher initially looks at three approaches to
decision making: the legalistic, the antinomian and the situational.

A. LEGALISM AS FLETCHER SEES IT

Within legalism,

one enters into every decision-making situation encumbered
with a whole apparatus of prefabricated rules and regulations.
Not just the spirit but the letter of the law reigns. Its
principles, codified in rules, are not merely guidelines or
maxims to illuminate the situation; they are directives to be
followed. Solutions are present, and you can 'look them up'
in a book--a Bible or a confessor's manual.[1]

Laws begin to pile up in this system of 'loopholes,' exceptions, etc.

and begin to appear on the books as "rules for breaking the rules."[2]

And there seems to develop an impersonalness within society in not

being able to confront 'real' life, i.e., pain, anxiety, fear, love,

heartbreak, etc. Legalism tends to help along the dehumanization

process that is developing within our society.

B. ANTINOMIANISM AS FLETCHER SEES IT

Over against legalism, as a sort of polar opposite, we can
put antinomianism. This is the approach with which one enters
into the decision-making situation armed with no principles or

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[1]Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster
Press, 1966).

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 18.

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maxims whatsoever, to say nothing of rule. In every 'exis-
tential moment' or 'unique' situation, it declares, one must
rely upon the situation itself, there and then, to provide
its ethical solution.[3]

Fletcher says that Sartre's "ethic of existentialism" is a

form, though subtler, of antinomianism. Sartre will not acknowledge

any general valid principles, or universal law. Paul too had to

struggle with this "principlelessness" with Christians of his era.

The Christians had at least two forms. The Gnostics illustrated one

of them, in their claim to "special knowledge." Therefore rules and

principles, previously accepted, need no longer be so, as this special

knowledge freed one from them. Paul also had to contend with liber-

tinism. Through Christ's saving grace, salvation through faith, or

the new life in Christ laws were no longer needed. Since Christ's

grace was expected to save them, persons no longer worried about sin,

and "lived it up."

A third approach, in between legalism and antinomian
unprincipleness, is situation ethics. . . . The situationist
enters into every decision-making situation fully armed with
the ethical maxims of his community and its heritage, and he
treats them with respect as illuminators of his problems.
Just the same he is prepared in any situation to compromise
them or set them aside in the situation if love seems better
served by doing so.[4]

Fletcher uses terms similar to Tillich's in describing Chris-

tian situationism as

a method that proceeds, so to speak, from (1) its one and
only law, *agape* (love), to (2) the *sophia* (wisdom) of the church
and culture, containing many 'general rules' of more or less

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[3]*Ibid.*, p. 22.   [4]*Ibid.*, p. 26.

reliability, to (3) the *kairos* (moment of decision, the full-
ness of time) in which the responsible self in the situation
decides whether the *sophia* can serve love there, or not.[5]

Christian situation ethics does not depend upon a "system" or code of living. It is an honest effort to relate worldly realities to love. These worldly realities create situational factors or circumstances that force us to alter laws, rules, or principles for the situation. This is what situational ethics is about. "It is antimoralistic as well as antilegalistic, for it is sensitive to variety and complexity. It is neither simplistic nor perfectionist."[6] Rules are merely guide-lines, and not to be slavishly followed. If a situation exists where a guideline does not fit, then the guideline must not be used.

Fletcher's system of ethics does not ignore natural or scriptural law. It accepts reason "as the instrument of moral judge-ment" in natural law, yet rejects the concept in natural law that "good" is given within the nature of things. In scriptural law, situation ethics is in agreement with God's revelation being the source of the norms for mankind, yet to label these norms as law, is against this ethic. The principles or revelations are to be looked at very closely, and utilized with love, but never to be used as law. Fletcher says that situation ethics "calls upon us to keep law in a subservient place, so that only love and reason really count when the chips are down."[7]

As we shall see, Christian situation ethics has only one
norm or principle or law . . . that is binding and unexception-
able, always good and right regardless of the circumstances.

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[5]*Ibid.*, p. 33.   [6]*Ibid.*, p. 29.   [7]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

> That is 'love'--the agape of the summary commandment to love
> God and the neighbor. Everything else without exception, all
> laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only
> contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love in any
> situation.[8]

Joseph Fletcher insists that we are not able to escape the 'heavy

burden' of moral integrity we face, by utilizing a Christian situation

ethics.

Some call this ethic the "new morality" making it look as

though there is a laxness within this ethical system (especially in

the area of sex). Fletcher states that this "new morality" is not

new, "either in method or content." As a method, he says, it is rooted

in our Western Christian morals. It is a radical departure from the

"conventional wisdom" we are at ease with today, but is grounded in

a word we are very familiar with--love.

C. FLETCHER'S FOUR PRESUPPOSITIONS

There are four presuppositions working in such a system of

situation ethics. Fletcher names these four as pragmatism, relativism,

positivism, and personalism. He says that as we utilize these four

principles within our ethical system their shape is "obviously one of

action, existence, eventfulness." This is an ethic of decision-

making. This ethic does not have to go to a manual, a book of laws,

or anything of the kind. Pragmatism can be looked upon as the prac-

tice aspect of this ethic. Fletcher says that the British empiricists

and American pragmatists have always come down to the practical

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[8]*Ibid.*, p. 30.

question Pilate asks, "What is truth?"

> Pragmatism is to be plainspoken, a practical or success posture. Its idiom expresses the genius and ethos or style of life of American culture and of the technoscientific era. Whereas classical ethics and aesthetics treated the good and the beautiful separately . . . , pragmatism lumps them and the cognitive all together, all three, under one broad umbrella-value. This puts the ethical question in the chain at the head of the conference table.[9]

Fletcher cautions however, that pragmatism is not a "self-contained" world view. It is only a method, it does not yield universal norms.

The second presupposition that is understood in this system is relativism. This means our decision must be relative to something. There must be an absolute, in order for relativity to be possible. Of course, as we suspect, this absolute, the only absolute in Fletcher's Christian ethic, is "*agape* love." He says that it relativizes the absolute, it does not absolutize the relative.

Fletcher's third presupposition is positivism. Within his ethical system, it is a "theological positivism" (positive theology). This positivism leads to an affirmation of "faith propositions" voluntaristically rather than rationalistically. Fletcher says it is "a-rational" rather than "irrational." Though it be outside of reason, it is not against reason. He says, "This Christian ethic 'posits' faith in God and reasons out what obedience to his commandment to love requires in any situation."[10]

Personalism is the fourth presupposition. People are the center of concern in this ethic. Our obligation is to people, not

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 42.   [10]*Ibid.*, p. 46.

things. Within the legalist system, the first question is "what does
the law say?" In situation ethics, we must ask "who is to be helped?"
"In Christian situation ethics, there is also a theological side to
personalism, since God is 'personal' and has created men in his own
image--*imago Dei*. Personality is therefore the first-order concern in
ethical choices."[11]

D. FLETCHER'S SIX PROPOSITIONS

Within Christian situation ethics, in addition to these four pre-
suppositions, Fletcher states six propositions. The first proposition
is, "Only one 'thing' is intrinsically good; namely love: nothing
else at all."[12] The most loving thing that can be done in any situa-
tion, is the right and good thing to do. The extrinsic value in this
is that it helps persons. Our value is that something is "good" if it
helps persons, and something is "bad" if it hurts persons.

> The person who is 'finding' the value may be either divine
> (God willing the good) or human (a man valuing something). Per-
> sons--God, self, neighbor--are both the subjects and the objects
> of value; they determine it to be value, and they determine it
> to be value for some person's sake. It is a value because some-
> body decided it was worth something.[13]

Other than the value established with helping or hurting someone,
ethical judgements or evaluations do not have meaning. Fletcher sees
as the supreme norm for Christian situation ethics, the neighbor love
commandment for all Christians. He says,

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[11]*Ibid.*, p. 51.　　　　　　　[12]*Ibid.*, p. 57.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

> Value, worth, ethical quality, goodness or badness, right
> or wrong--these things are only predicates, they are not proper-
> ties. . . . There is only one thing that is always good and
> right, intrinsically good regardless of the context, and that
> one thing is love.[14]

Fletcher says that love is a principle. It is a "formal" principle that expresses the type of action Christians should follow. It is the only principle that is always "good and right" in all situations. "Love is the only universal."[15] It does not require that you "be like me," but only that "we do what we can where we are." Love's perfection is only seen in God. Within man it can only be an action, whereas in God it is indwelling.

> God is not reason but love, and he employs reason as
> the instrument of his love. In the strict sense of the word,
> this is the theology of situation ethics.[16]

Looking at the reverse of the proposition that "only one thing is intrinsically good and that is love," one would expect malice to be intrinsically evil. Associated with malice is hate, which is considered the opposite of love. Yet Fletcher disputes this, and claims, with hate (as well as love), there is feeling. With hate (and love), a person is treated as a human being. Indifference, Fletcher feels, is the opposite of love. Indifference is devoid of feeling or caring. Indifference treats the individual as a thing, an "it." This dehumanizes the situation to a transaction between an object and an entity. Indifference is the evil, and the only thing worse than indifference is indifference to evil.

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[14]*Ibid.,* p. 60. [15]*Ibid.*

[16]*Ibid.,* p. 62.

The second proposition is "The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else."[17] Love replaces the law in this ethic.

> We must be quite adamant about this. The conventional view is that through obeying law we serve love, because (it is claimed) there is no real conflict between law and love.[18]

Fletcher acknowledges love commands us to follow the law, but these principles, precepts, laws or whatever, must serve love. If the law is used against love, then the law must not be followed.

If we are to codify the Christian love ethic, to legalize it, we destroy it. Through codification, can come repudiation. Codification creates quicksand that tends to smother the innocent with laws, not justice. Christian ethics must be a situation ethic if it is to have any influence on society.

> Christian love is not desire. *Agape* is giving love—non-reciprocal, neighbor-regarding—'neighbor' meaning 'everybody,' even an enemy (Luke 6:32-35). It is usually distinguished from friendship love (*philia*) and romantic love (*eros*), both of which are selective and exclusive. Erotic love and philic love have their proper place in our human affairs but they are not what is meant by *agape, agapeic* love or 'Christian love.' Erotic and philic love are emotional, but the effective principle of Christian love is will, disposition; it is an attitude, not feeling.[19]

Fletcher says that one of the most common obligations to Christian situation ethics is that we must look for more facts, we must be (intelligently) more critical, and we must have a deeper commitment to righteousness, while making decisions. The amount of

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[17]*Ibid.*, p. 69.   [18]*Ibid.*, p. 70.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 79.

"soul searching" or work this requires, seems to "turn-off" the lazy person. It is so much easier to be "saddled" by a law that requires no thinking or effort on the part of the individual. It would seem people want freedom without the pain and work of attaining freedom; therefore freedom is ultimately lost. The trade-off must be at the point of experiencing the risk, pain, work, and the courage involved in maintaining freedom. "Law easily undermines political freedom (democracy) and personal freedom (grace)."[20]

This Christian love ethic is not, and does not pretend to be easy. It requires a Christian to be mature. The Christian must be able to handle this freedom he has, as well as experiencing grace and responding to life. He must be able to handle the responsibility of this freedom. This ethic tries to widen our freedom. This is why we must be data conscious, but not data dependent. Data must not become another law in order to make decisions. "Love, unlike law, sets no carefully calculated limits on obligation; it seeks the most good possible in every situation. It maximizes or optimizes obligation."[21] Fletcher says that love is a law unto itself. It will not share its authority, its power, its influence, with any other law.

> If it is supposed that the situation method of moral-decision making is too open to a conscious or unconscious rationalizing or selfish and evasive motives, we need only to remember that self-deceit and excuse-making can exploit law too far for its own purposes, often as easily as it uses freedom. Our real motives can hide as effectively behind rules as behind free contextual

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[20]*Ibid.*, p. 84.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 82.

choices. Love is a common camouflage, and makes a much better disguise. It is harder to hide double-dealing when you have no protective cover of law.[22]

The third of Fletcher's six propositions, is "Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else."[23] Love involves prudence and thoughtfulness, Fletcher maintains. He feels that prudence and love are the same, since they both seek out others, they do not seek within. Prudence is responsible for the carefulness required of love in this ethic. This type of love is far different from the concepts of love we have in society today. We cannot look at this love as the sentimental or irrational love which creates emotional imperatives that make us do things we might regret later. This quality love, that is the backbone of Christian situation ethics, has justice as part of it.

> If love is to seek the neighbor's welfare, and justice is being fair as between neighbors, then how do we put these two things together in our acts, in the situation? The answer is that in the Christian ethic the twain become one. Even if we define justice as giving to others what is their due, we must redefine it Christianly. For what is it that is due to our neighbors? It is love that is due—only love. . . . Love is justice, justice is love.[24]

Love on a one-to-one scale is not too difficult to manage, as the only data we must relate to is related with the one problem or task ahead of us. The difficulty of this ethic raises its head when we have a ratio of the decision-maker versus the many. We must attempt to gather all the data we can in order to make our decision towards love.

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[22]*Ibid.*, p. 85.   [23]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 88.

>A lot of our trouble can be traced to an inveterate tendency to make love a sentiment rather than a formal principle, to romanticize it or assign it to friendship, . . . But Christianly speaking, we know that this is wrong; that *agape* is what is due to all others, to our various and many neighbors whether we 'know' them or not. Justice is nothing other than love working out its problems. This viewpoint has existed potentially for a long time. Now we state it flatly and starkly so that there is no mistaking what is said. Love = justice; justice = love.[25]

Fletcher says that justice is *agape* or Christian love "thinking things out." Christians must calculate, compare, and contrast data in order to work towards love. Obviously when we are in the situation of making a decision with respect to the many, we must do the greatest good for the greatest number. This is similar to utilitarianism, yet differs in that their pleasure principle is replaced by Christian love. Fletcher says that the hedonist mathematics of the utilitarians becomes agapeic mathematics for us. The largest amount of welfare for the most neighbors is what we must strive for.

Fletcher does not really try to form any coalition with the utilitarian, yet sees within the utilitarian's ethic an answer in the complicated "calculus" of decision-making.

>The Christian situationist's happiness is in doing God's will as it is expressed in Jesus' summary. And his utility method sets him to seeking his happiness (pleasure, too, and self-realization!) by seeking his neighbors' good on the widest possible scale.[26]

Situation ethics does not try to define happiness, pleasure, etc. Fletcher sees other ethics break down in this area. He seems to concentrate on the thought that we must seek the goal of attaining

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 95.   [26] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

the most love. It is even our "duty." But with this we must follow Jesus' summary, to pursue love's aim.

Not only must love calculate the short-term consequence, but it must take into account long-term consequences. We must not have blinders on in our pursuit of just, loving decisions.

Looking at our concept of agapeic justice, we acknowledge the use of laws as guidelines for justice in society. However, we cannot overlook *agape* love in all decisions relative to law, if we are to practice a Christian situation ethic. We as Christians have a moral obligation to both obey, and disobey the laws that help us attain justice. When agapeic justice is not being served, it is our moral obligation to right the wrong, even if it means breaking the law. Legal justice does not necessarily equal moral justice. We as Christians must continually be aware of this.

Fletcher's fourth proposition is "Love wills the neighbor's good whether we like him or not."[27] He describes his Christian *agape* love as our attitudes (not feelings) towards others. *Agape* love is aware of our neighbor's needs, and desires to satisfy them. This love is not an emotional love. It is a love that is characterized in awareness of ourselves (reason and emotions) as well as others. The *agape* ethic is more an ethic of attitudes.

Some, who feel love is related to emotions, think love's opposite might be hate, however as pointed out earlier, Fletcher feels love's opposite is indifference. This non-caring is the real

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[27]*Ibid.*, p. 103.

opposite of love. If indifference is love's opposite, then the deep meaning of Christian *agape* love ties in with goodwill and benevolence. Christian love

> does not seek the deserving, nor is it judgemental when it makes its decisions--judgemental, that is, about people it wants to serve. *Agape* goes out to our neighbors not for our own sakes nor for theirs, really, but for God's. We can say quite plainly and colloquially that Christian love is the business of loving the unloveable, i.e., the unlikeable.[28]

This love is a radical love. It is different from what society sees love as. Fletcher says that God's nature works consistently within the world, and is felt the same by both the deserving and undeserving. If God does not differentiate, then how can man tie himself into an ethic where he is forced to like everybody? It does require us to have an attitude, or awareness in how we relate with others. If love is equated with affections (like *philia* love-friendship love), we cannot control it. We cannot just turn on, or off, our emotions as we do a lamp. But we can control a love that is generated by will.

"The radical obligation of the Christian ethic is to love not only the stranger-neighbor and the acquaintance-neighbor but even the enemy-neighbor."[29] All neighbors are not friends, and we may as well admit it. Our Christian love does not require us to abandon any of our values, but it does require us to follow them in Christian love.

> Human relations can, of course, be both agapeic and philic. All that *agape* stipulates is that we shall will another's good. Yet it is not without its significance that Christians find it

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[28]*Ibid.*, p. 105.   [29]*Ibid.*, p. 107.

much easier to have friendship for others when they start, at
least, with love. Given the will, *philia* finds a way, discovers
a reason to follow love. But when and if this happens, the
feeling side is secondary--one of love's dividends.[30]

In looking at other ethics, and how they relate to the individual, Fletcher feels that the egoist thinks only of himself. This is exploitative, and uses others to satiate one's own desires. Another type of ethic is a mutualistic ethic in which one gives only as long as he receives. This ethic is described by Fletcher as the dynamic friendship. The agapeic ethic says only that we give without expecting anything in return.

There is nothing wrong with self-love, but there is something wrong with its motives. If we love ourselves just for ourselves, this is wrong. But if we love ourselves for the sake of our neighbors, our friends, our God, then loving ourself is right. "For to love God and the neighbor is to love one's self in the right way; to love one's self in the right way is to love God and one's neighbor."[31]

This fifth proposition of Christian situation ethics is "Only the end justifies the means; nothing else."[32] Fletcher raises this question, and asks that if the ends do not justify the means, then what does? We must have some purpose or end in sight with our actions. If we do not, everything would be haphazard.

It should be apparent, of course, that not any old end
will justify any old means. We all assume that some ends
justify some means; no situationist would make a universal

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[30]*Ibid.*, p. 109.   [31]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 120.

> of it! Being pragmatic, he always asks the price and
> supposes that in theory and practice everything has
> its price.[33]

We must look at our loyalties to see where they go. Do they serve

the ends with regard to the means? If they do, and the means take

into account *agape* love, then we can truly say the ends justify the

means.

The means are a part of the process. They are not neutrals

that do not affect end results. We must select these "tools" with

great care, keeping in mind Christian love while choosing. Means are

not, and cannot be indifferent to our process. They serve some purpose

within it, and we must not choose them lightly. Christian ethics,

entangled in literalism and legalism, has been caught in this "web"

of ends justifying the means. Men

> have always twisted and turned around their foolish doctrine
> that means are intrinsically good or evil, that they are not to
> be justified by any end or usefulness external to the supposedly
> inherent 'value' of the means themselves.[34]

With this "web" the Christian ethic has spun itself into, man is able

to rationalize wars and its methods, economic exploitation of people,

and other ills of society.

We must realize, and internalize, that love is the only good.

Nothing else. Nothing has meaning other than love. Love is good, of

and in itself. Knowing this, Fletcher asks,

> What is it, then, that we are to take into account as
> we analyse and weigh and judge the situation? What do we
> look for, what questions do we ask? There are four questions

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[33]*Ibid.*, p. 121. [34]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

of basic and indispensable importance to be raised,
all of which are to be balanced on love's scales.
There are no foregone decisions.[35]

The first of the four, is the ends. What are the goals, purposes,

etc. desired? The second is by what means are we to achieve this end?

Can we use stealing, bribery, or other "evils" to achieve our ends

within our decision-making process? The third question we must ask

is, what is our motive? What is driving us and by what dynamic? And

last we must ask the question as to the consequences of our process.

Both long- and short-run consequences must be analyzed.

With these questions asked of ourselves, we cannot be legalistic

about our decision-making. Each situation is looked at on its own

merit, and the decision made relative to *agape* love.

The sixth and last proposition Fletcher advocates is, "Love's

decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively."[36]

Situation ethics is not a system whereby we are relieved of

the burden of thinking. Many people need to lean on a prefabricated

system that does the thinking for them, and thus relieves them of the

task of determining their ethical system. While using this crutch of

legalistic rules, man seems to lose a bit of his "soul" in this

dehumanizing process. Fletcher feels "People like to wallow or cower

in the security of the law. They cannot trust themselves too much

to the freedom of grace; they prefer the comfortableness of law."[37]

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[35]*Ibid.*, p. 127.   [36]*Ibid.*, p. 134.

[37]*Ibid.*

The situationist however, is able to free himself from the bonds of a legalistic system. He is able to live more in freedom, thereby creating more wholeness within himself. This is not to say that the anxieties and fears experienced in life are left behind. They will probably still exist at times, but what is lost is the addictive dependency on law that dehumanizes. The freedom to love makes possible decisions that bring wholeness rather than dehumanization.

> Political and social establishments feel safer when buttressed by an ethical establishment, a fixed code. In some circles there is a growing hunger for law; it can be seen in cultural conformism, and in the lust for both political and theological orthodoxy. Like the existentialists to an extent, situationists are in revolt against the cultural stodginess of 'respectable' and traditional ethics. They rebel against the reigning ethics of American middle-class culture because of its high-flown moral laws on the one hand and its evasive shilly-shallying on the other; it is often and acutely described as 'the leap from Sunday to Monday.'[38]

Within our "semi-legalist" system we see lip service to the letter of the law rather than its spirit. The reality of "no-struggle, law dependent life" is comfortable. Yet the true Christian individual cannot possibly be comfortable with a system that encourages cheating, "loopholing," dehumanizing, etc. The Christian needs more than this to be able to handle a Christian life in tension with society. The Christian situationists seem to have the edge on the Christian non-situationists, in that, for the Christian situationist,

> his faith answers for him three questions of the seven always to be asked. These three are his 'universals.' He knows the what; it is love. He knows the why; for God's

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[38]*Ibid.*, p. 137.

sake. He knows the who; it is his neighbors, people. But only in and of the situation can he answer the other four questions: When? Where? Which? How? These are, as we have suggested, the *kairos* factors. There and then only can he find out what is the right thing to do. The Christian ethic is a love ethic primarily, not a hope ethic (although it has eschatological meaning). This means it is for the present, here and now. By faith we live in the past, by hope we live in the future, but by love we live in the present. Legalism is wrong because it tries to push love back into the past, in to old decisions already made.[39]

When love is in command, decisions become relative to the situation. The facts, and *agape* love, leads us through decisions. We must develop a consistency in approaching our decisions through love. Decisions are relative--our obligation absolute.

Fletcher feels that by existing, this is demanded of us. We cannot escape this, but may help it. The Christian situationist knows he has to make a decision, and decides so for love's sake. This "special" love is a "responsive" love, a "thanksgiving" love to God. In conclusion,

Christian ethics or moral theology is not a scheme of living according to a code but a continuous effort to relate love to a world of relativities through a casuistry obedient to love; its constant task is to work out strategy and tactics of love for Christ's sake.[40]

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[39]*Ibid.*, p. 142.　　　　[40]*Ibid.*, p. 158.

CHAPTER II

LEGALISM VS. ANTINOMIANISM

In evaluating Joseph Fletcher's ethical system, we must understand more fully what legalism and antinomianism are in order to gain some perspective as to why Fletcher feels situation ethics is a more "middle of the road" ethic.

A. IS FLETCHER'S TREATMENT OF ANTINOMIANISM ADEQUATE?

The roots of antinomianism date back to the early Greek culture. The words *arti* (opposite or against) and *jomos* (anything established, or law) put together mean "against law."

Within Christianity there were charges of antinomianism made as early as Paul's time. He was accused of antinomian tendencies by early Christians who "deviated from the path," and also by Jews who were against his teachings. In Romans 3:1-9 Paul writes about

> the early Jew, who with his casuistry, makes a play of
> being logically consistent in order to show his teaching on
> law and justification absurd or blasphemous . . .[1]

In Romans 6:1, Paul attempts to refute lawlessness. Referring to Romans 6:1, Laymon wrote

> The objection envisaged here (cf. vs. 15) may be ironical only,
> assumed to come from a Jewish critic voicing his impression that
> Paul's argument since 3:20 has been indifferent to moral issues.[2]

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[1]Gunther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 90.

[2]Edwin Cyril Blackman, "The Letter of Paul to the Romans," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 779b.

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So Paul again reacts to attacks by Jewish antagonists.

Paul experienced both accusations of being antinomian and legalistic in his beliefs and practices. Many times he had to differentiate between being free of the law and being an antinomianist. Paul faced

> a dual threat to the Church: antinomianism . . . and some form of Gnosticism, a heresy within the early Christian Church which claimed to have special knowledge (*gnosis*) concerning salvation and which considered all matter evil. The latter view led either to asceticism on the one hand or to complete moral license on the other.[3]

Some early Christians felt that Christianity released them from law and therefore were free from all restraints.

> The term antinomianism is used to describe this aberration. It is most noticeable among groups--especially in the second and sixteenth centuries and some modern sects--which claim control by the Spirit. Possibly there were groups of this sort among Paul's converts at Corinth, and also in the Church at Rome.[4]

Turning our eye to the book of Jude in the New Testament the subject of antinomianism appears once again. In Jude 1:4 an emergency exists.

> The emergency is urgent since ungodly persons have become part of the community of faith. They not only deny Jesus Christ as Lord; they even exploit his gracious love as an opportunity for immorality. The danger from this evil was that it was within the Church. While their ultimate doom was sure, something had to be done about these persons lest the whole community be contaminated . . . Such evil could not be harbored within the fellowship.

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[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Claude Holmes Thompson, "The Book of Jude," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 942a.

Apparently the evil here is a form of antinomianism, i.e. the teaching that a person living within the faith is free from observing the law.[5]

J. MacBride Sterrett takes a closer look at antinomianism, saying that

we find the Apostles (Romans 3:8, 31,6:1, Ephesians 5:6, II Peter 2:18, 19) warning Christians against perversions of their doctrine as an excuse for licentiousness, or antinomianism. The Gnostic sects, hyper-spiritual in doctrine, were sensualistic in their morals. They held that the spirit (πνεῦμα), as part of the eternal Divine energy, existed absolutely separate and apart from the soul (ψυχη) and the material body. Hence all acts of the soul and body might wallow in licentiousness without detracting from salvation of the spirit (πνεῦμα). Here we find with the Valentinian Gnostics the most frank and definite statement of Antinomianism in its widest and most immoral form.[6]

Antinomianism randomly popped up throughout the third to fifteenth century. It seemed to reach its greatest height however during the fifteenth century when a controversy between Martin Luther and Agricola broke out.

In Luther's emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith he had used expressions which might be understood to indicate opposition between the law of Moses and the gospel, as though with the establishment of the gospel the law of Moses was no longer of any value. But when Luther carefully expressed himself on this point, as he did in his instruction to the Saxon preachers in 1527, he gave to the teachings of the Old Testament their proper place in the Christian life. This was disputed by Agricola, and a controversy broke out between him and Luther, in which he treated Luther's most extreme statements in regard to faith as though they were to be taken literally.[7]

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[5]*Ibid.*, p. 942b.

[6]J. MacBride Sterrett, "Antinomianism," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1908), I, 582.

[7]"Antinomianism," in *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1957), II, 35.

Agricola and Luther were initially together on their beliefs of "justification through faith," but Agricola's zealous belief in this, manifested itself in a statement saying, "Art thou steeped in sin, an adulterer or a thief? If thou believest, thou art in salvation. All who follow Moses must go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses."[8] This happened in 1537. Luther then characterized these teachings as antinomianism. Agricola retracted these statements later and was reconciled with Luther. However the controversy was picked up and carried on by other followers of Luther and Agricola.

Along with the controversy in Europe, during this period England was troubled by those "against the law." While Cromwell ruled, sects within the high Calvinist movement incorporated antinomianism as part of their theology. They claimed that "as the elect cannot fall from grace, any act performed by them, however sinful it may seem to man, is not in reality sinful."[9]

Antinomianism again reappeared in England during the John Wesley movement in the eighteenth century. "Some early Methodists claimed to be above the necessity of keeping the moral codes, only to be positively repudiated by John Wesley."[10] This general trend took on such a noticeable number of people that John Fletcher, in 1771, felt an obligation to rebut the antinomian claims in a book he wrote entitled *Checks to Antinomianism*.

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[8]Sterrett, I, 582.

[9]"Antinomianism," II, 35.

[10]Thompson, p. 943.

Sterrett feels the antinomian belief has even carried forward into today's thought.

> It has again become known in our time under the popular idea of 'once saved, always saved,' or the dangerous teaching of the eternal security of believers. It likewise underlies the current plea for a 'new morality' which appears suspiciously similar to the old morality.[11]

Sterrett continues, saying

> It is not in place to carry the discussion of this term beyond its proper theological role. We may only add that the principle of the thing--opposition to law--is found in every sphere of the organized or institutional activities of humanity. All who advocate doctrines subversive of the Family, the State, or the Church, are antinomians. All moral sophists are anti- nomians. All who pervert the principle that 'the end justifies the means,' into a disregard for established moral laws, so that some personal or finite end be attained, are antinomians. And every individual who pleads special exemption from obedience to the common law of morality is an antinomian.[12]

Sterrett's statement on what and who antinomians are, is extreme, yet Joseph Fletcher suggests that "the approach with which one enters into the decision-making situation armed with no principles or maxims whatsoever, to say nothing of rule" is how we should make our decisions. On antinomianism, Fletcher feels, "In every 'existen- tial moment' or 'unique' situation, it declares, one must rely upon the situation of itself, there and then, to provide its ethical solu- tion."[13] Sterrett approaches antinomianism from a reaction against law. Fletcher, on the other hand, approaches antinomianism from the

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[11]*Ibid.*

[12]Sterrett, I, 582.

[13]Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 22.

position that antinomianists do not have principles or guidelines, their ethical situation is chaotic.

I contend that we cannot take either statement on antinomianism as satisfactory. Over against Fletcher's "no principle decision-making antinomianist," is the Gnostic of Paul's time with an established theological system with guidelines from which to operate. (They were considered antinomianists by some.) Over against Sterrett's "all who advocate doctrines subversive of the Family, the State, or the Church . . . " sits the "antinomian" existentialist who attempts to achieve deeper meaning in self-existence.

It would seem that the greatest protest to antinomianism then, is its ability to say generally that there are not moral norms with which we may operate that are common to all humanity. Wilford Cross seems to get at the heart of these differing attitudes on antinomianism. He contends "Antinomianism . . . is equivocal, for it denies in a spirit of radical nominalism that any structured, general moral norms are binding or useful. It appeals to the element of uniqueness in every particular situation."[14]

To box up and label antinomianism as "A" or "B" seems foolish. In doing this, we close our eyes to finding any truth this line of thought has to offer. All sides on the antinomian issues may agree on the goal of achieving ethical unity with the "ultimate reality," and we all may agree on eliminating antinomianism as a system or an ethical

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[14]Harvey Cox (ed.) *The Situation Ethics Debate* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 159.

standard by which to operate, but we cannot eliminate or deny certain truth elements inherent within this system. What is most important, is that there be an understanding of the ethical system and its elements, and a realization of those elements that bring each of us closer to each other and that ultimate reality each of us seeks, God.

There does seem to be some consensus as to what antinomianism is, but nobody seems to be able to agree on who is an antinomian. Paul Lehmann leads us to believe that Bishop Robinson's concept of love leads us down the antinomian path. Yet Wilford Cross feels

> Bishop Robinson, despite some of his utterances is not an antinomian. In his first lecture at Liverpool he said 'a moral net there must be in any society. Christians must be to the fore in every age in helping to construct it, criticize it, and keep it in repair.' . . . I would, of course, be the first to agree that there are a whole class of actions like stealing, lying, killing, committing adultery--which are so fundamentally destructive of human relationships that no differences of century or society can change their character.[15]

The "who" of antinomianism seems more difficult to establish than the "what" of antinomianism. All of us seem able to agree with each other only on those things that can be objectively and logically proven in an agreed upon system (i.e. we agree that $2 + 2 = 4$ when operating in a base 10 numerical system).

We see now that there are differing views of what antinomianism is and who antinomians are. Within our evaluation of Joseph Fletcher's system of ethics, we must realize that definitions given by Fletcher are his definitions, and may not necessarily agree with the thoughts

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[15]Paul Lehmann, "Chalcedon in Technopolis," *Christianity and Crisis*, XXV:12 (July 12, 1965), 149-151.

of other ethicists on antinomianism. In trying to gain truth we should attempt to understand those elements relevant to our search, and through our understanding these elements, see how they operate within the suggested system. In doing this, we will be able to take those truths we experience, into our own ethical system and function better as Christians.

B. IS FLETCHER'S TREATMENT OF LEGALISM ADEQUATE?

We must now turn our eye to legalism, and focus in on it. Eugene Ehrhardt gives a general explanation of what legalism is. He makes the statement,

> legalism is the name given to the view that moral conduct consists in the observance of a law or body of laws. It stands opposed to those conceptions of morality which postulate an end to be pursued or an ideal to be realized rather than a law to be fulfilled.[16]

Ehrhardt feels that Christian ethics is dependent upon a concept of law, and rejects any form of antinomianism.

Paul Ramsey presents Joseph Fletcher's concept of legalism stating,

> Legalism begins with law, or rules, or principles; it 'encumbers' moral decision-making with 'a whole apparatus of prefabricated rules and regulations.' Legalism lives by a program, not by a norm, even when it 'listens to love' and develops a casuistry to correct its grossest rigidities.
> . . . Protestant scriptural legalism and Roman Catholic 'natural law' legalism 'treat principles as rules rather

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[16]Eugene Ehrhardt, "Nomism," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1908), IX, 380.

than maxims,' Fletcher wrote in the Commonweal discussion of the 'new morality.' He went on to say that, 'legalism treats many of its rules idolatrously by making them into absolutes.'[17]

Forell approaches the question of what legalism is by telling us what the legalist believes.

> The legalist believes that the will of God has been expressed in the form of commandments or laws which man can and must fulfill. To do this is to live according to these laws. To do evil is to break any of these laws.[18]

He illustrates this by telling of the Jew and the importance of Torah to the Jew. Within this context, Forell gives this example:

> An Orthodox Jew does not travel on the Sabbath. Even if the journey is distinctly a pleasure trip it is forbidden, since it would constitute a breach of the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 31:14-15). Similarly, an Orthodox Jew does not switch on an electric light on the Sabbath, for even this simple act is considered work, and is therefore forbidden. He does not carry anything, even a handkerchief, on the Sabbath, because this too would be work and a breach of the law.[19]

Forell finishes, saying that the important thing is that right and wrong are determined legally.

> Conformity to divine law is right, breaking the divine law is wrong. And the law is a code which is available to all men. For the legalist, the problem 'What is right?' does not exist. His main problem is rather that of the accurate observation of the laws which are established as right.[20]

Ehrhardt also examines overall Jewish legalism, and states,

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[17]Paul Ramsey, *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 145.

[18]George W. Forell, *Ethics of Decision* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 50.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 51.

[20]*Ibid.*

> Judaism reduced all moral life to the observance of an
> historically revealed law, whose various constituents cannot
> be brought under the unity of one pervading spirit. Neverthe-
> less, the obedience of the Jews issued in many cases from pure
> respect for an inward acquiescence in the law.[21]

Ehrhardt feels that the Jew has a love for the law, but that love can

manifest itself in the form of "legalistic bigotry."

Not only were the Jews of early times familiar with law and

legalism, but the Stoics and Greek writers also.

> We nevertheless find Socrates, or at least Plato speaking
> as the interpreter of Socrates, insisting upon a willing and
> resolute obedience to the laws, and condemning the attitude
> of those who obey them only from the fear of punishment.[22]

> In Crito, Socrates' friend of that name tries to persuade
> him to escape from prison, where he is awaiting execution.
> Socrates insists that one wrong may not be righted by a retal-
> iatory wrong, and affirms his loyalty to the laws, which he
> represents (and this is a Platonic myth in germ) as themselves
> asserting their claim upon him.[23]

In looking at legalism in the New Testament, I find that "By

'law' or 'the law,' the New Testament usually means the law of God

revealed in the Old Testament."[24] W. D. Davies says that within the

Synoptics, the law no longer regulates man with respect to God, but

that Jesus has taken the place of the law. He was not concerned with

annulling the law. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, "Think not that I have

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[21] Ehrhardt, IX, 380.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Plato, *Euthypro, Apology, Crito, and Symposium* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), p. x.

[24] W. D. Davies, "Law in the NT," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, 95.

come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."[25]

Jesus probably as a second Moses (parallel to, and not only antithetic to, the first one) is sent, not to annul the law, but to fulfill it. . . . As the Synoptics present him, then, Jesus had a twofold attitude toward the law: he seemed to annul it, at least by implication, and at the same time to affirm it.[26]

Within the early Christian community law was a problem. It was most difficult to get the proper balance desired (as it is today) in life. Stephen, Paul and other Apostles had difficulties in balancing "living in Christ" with law. Each seemed to see this balance a little differently (as those in the community did) thereby creating problems in the evangelical task each had. In Romans 7:13-25, Paul speaks of the inner tension man experiences between law and sin. He feels "Sin makes use of the law. Man cannot blame the law; his culpability remains his own, except insofar as he is incapacitated by the power sin has over him."[27]

Legalism, within the early Christian Church, became more of a problem as the Church evolved.

. . . such writings of the second century as *The Shepherd of Hermes,* the *Didache,* and *The Instructor* by Clement of Alexandria, all illustrate a legalistic turn of the ancient Church and, to different degrees, a rigorous standard.[28]

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[25]Bible, *The Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1176.

[26]Davies, III, 95.

[27]Blackman, p. 781.

[28]L. Harold DeWolf, *Responsible Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 82.

Kirsopp Lake talks of the *Didache* as "a manual of Church instruction, consisting almost entirely of commands and exhortations."[29]

Harold DeWolf describes the Shepherd of Hermes main theme, of the second-century, as

a call for immediate repentance by all Christians who have committed sin since baptism, for never again will such opportunity be open. Here is a little of detailed law, but the extreme limitations of forgiveness breathes the spirit of legalism.[30]

Forell feels

not more than one hundred years after Saint Paul, the Christian church began to be dominated by a spirit which reduced the Gospel into a new law. To be a Christian meant to obey the laws of the church.[31]

Although Jesus and Paul and others seeked to free persons from legalism, it would seem that human nature persists in codifying and legalizing.

The tension between legalism and antinomianism is one of the elements in ethics that needs constant re-evaluation and awareness, to avoid falling into the trap of either dependency upon the law, or dependency upon emotional whims. The need to develop a way of living that frees persons from dependencies on law, and also the dependency on acting out one's emotions indiscriminately, seems to me what Joseph Fletcher is attempting in his new morality or situation ethics.

In analyzing Fletcher's overview of legalism, Henlee H.

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[29] *The Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), I, 305.

[30] DeWolf, p. 82

[31] Forell, p. 51.

Barnette agrees on many points that Fletcher makes. Barnette feels that, "Situationism is a needed correction for overemphasis upon laws, codes, rules and principles."[32] But he warns, "It is not a self-sufficient methodology in Christian ethics."[33]

Harvey Seifert agrees also about rules becoming too binding. He acknowledges that circumstances can alter the decision, even the sixth commandment "you shall not kill" should be examined if an individual is in a position of being killed by an insane person. Continuing this line of thought, he says,

> Suicide may be heroism if it saves others on a lost Arctic expedition with supplies running low. We need to be extricated from too rigid or archaic rules and we need to learn a proper humility about our conclusions. A certain flexibility is necessary if we are to be completely true to all complexities.[34]

Most seem to agree with Fletcher on laws becoming too rigid in society, and a certain legalism developing that needs correcting. However, many of these same people feel Fletcher goes overboard in his ethic, by insisting each situation is unique. This is seen as a denial of any similarities between situations, and the tendency toward a non-normative antinomianism, or ruleless relativism which caters to chaos. Harvey Seifert counters Fletcher's point of view about the "uniqueness of each situation" by stating,

> The similarities between situations become especially apparent if society as a whole is taken into account rather than restricting observations simply to the individual actor or to the few persons directly involved.[35]

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[32]Cox, p. 138.

[33]*Ibid.*

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

[35]*Ibid.*, p. 228.

He is saying that society is confronted everyday with similar situations in which general rules or laws may be made to guide us in our everyday living. Seifert continues,

> If one goes beyond extreme individualism to a cultural viewpoint, he will recognize that the undesirable consequences of some acts for society as a whole outweigh any advantages they might have for the individual participants.[36]

Wilford Cross, in his analysis, objects to

> the polemical character of much of the writing, and its prophetic but sometimes rather tedious attack upon 'legalism,' especially since no effort is made, really, to distinguish between the uses of law as guidelines and the imposition of legalistic requirements in morality.[37]

There seems to be a general consensus among critics of

Fletcher, on his use of "legalism" to the effect that,

> In his legitimate attempt to explore the inadequacies of codes, Fletcher seems to forget their genuine and useful function in guiding the conduct of the many.[38]

The stereotype and use of the word "legalist" by Fletcher loses the awareness of where law can serve society and the positive aspects of it. Fletcher stereotypes law in all of its negative aspects, therefore not really being true to the task of finding truth in a system of ethics designed at one time to humanize living. This is a major criticism of Fletcher in his treatment of legalism.

C. IS FLETCHER TRUE TO SCRIPTURE IN HIS REFERENCES TO THEM?

In evaluating Fletcher, it is important not only to look at his use of terms relative to the point he is making, but also looking

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[36]*Ibid.*   [37]*Ibid.*, p. 73.   [38]*Ibid.*, p. 238.

at whether he is faithful to the biblical texts he quotes. As one

illustration, Elton Eenigenberg, in his article, "How New is the New

Morality?"[39] looks at Fletcher's use of Matthew 12:3-4. The passage

reads, "He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did, when he

was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of

God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for

him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the Priests?'"

Eenigenberg and Fletcher both agree that the eating of the bread of

the Presence was an unlawful act by David and his men, as only priests

were allowed to partake. Both also agree that Jesus brought forth the

awareness that 'love transcends the demands of the law.' The act in

itself was good, as the men were starving and had need of food.

A divergence develops between Fletcher and Eenigenberg when

the latter observes that

> David's act with respect to the bread of the Presence did
> not abrogate the law with respect to it. The ceremonial law
> would continue to be observed as a divine requirement upon the
> people. The people would observe the rule with faith and love
> in their hearts toward God, or they might look upon it as an
> unnecessary tyranny.[40]

The point Eenigenberg makes is that what David did was good for that

point in time, but this does not mean the law is invalid for most

other times before and since. The law is still a good (or bad) law

within the tradition of the Church and is to continue being observed.

Because the law has encountered a point in time where it could be

transcended, this does not invalidate the law. Eenigenberg says the

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[39]*Ibid.*, p. 204.   [40]*Ibid.*

people during David's time continued observing the law (hating or loving it) in their everyday lives. This point is important to remember. Ceremonial law was not absolute, but one does not go around breaking it at his whim. The exceptional circumstance, where human need transcends the law, is that point in time where law may be broken.

This story of David is referred to in I Samuel 21:1-6. The background, or understanding for the "bread of Presence" is in Leviticus 24:5-9. In Leviticus the Lord is talking to Moses, giving Moses some priestly laws. In vss. 1-4 the Lord is advising on pure oil for the pure gold lampstand. In vss. 5-9, the bread of Presence is discussed, i.e.

> and you shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. 6) And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the table of pure gold. 7) And you shall put pure frankincense with each row, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord. 8) Every sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord continually on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant forever. 9) And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in the holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the offerings by fire to the Lord, a perpetual due. (Lev. 24:5-9.)

> The bread of the Presence

> consists of twelve cakes, symbols of God's covenant with the twelve tribes, made from the best wheat flour, . . . Being within the sanctuary, they are to be tended only by Aaron, i.e. the high priest. Every sabbath he is to renew the bread and incense, burning the previous week's incense as a token offering and joining with other priests in eating the old loaves as a most holy portion.[41]

Thus we see the sacredness of the bread of Presence, originating from

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[41]Jacob Milgrom, "The Book of Leviticus," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 82.

God's covenant with Moses.

In I Samuel 21:1-9, David escapes to Nob, an outcast because Saul feels David will be the next king, so Saul wants to kill David. On arriving at Nob, David demands of the priest Ahimelech, food for himself and his men. The only food available is the "bread of Presence" and Ahimelech says under the circumstances he can give it, but only if David and his "young men" are clean (i.e. "kept themselves from women"). David assures Ahimelech of this and is given the five loaves of bread.

Now as we fit these two parts into Jesus' response to the Pharisees, we see there can be a point in time to transcend law. Bornkamm seems to agree with Eenigenberg, in principle, in that he says, "Jesus does not intend to abolish the scriptures and the law, and to replace them by his own message. They are and remain the proclamation of God's will."[42] In Gunther Bornkamm's comment on Jesus and Law, he says that the Jews would not allow discrimination between "greater or lesser" importance of the law. Yet

> In Jesus's preaching, . . . this discrimination is exercised, thoroughly and without inhibition although not from the point of view of a purely rational criticism, but because of the immediate presence of the divine will, which also demands the immediate assent of our understanding. This means at the same time, for the sake of the law, not against the law: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice' (Matthew 9:13; 12:7).[43]

It would seem then, that Fletcher has not really done an

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[42]Gunther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 99.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 100.

adequate exegesis of this passage (Matthew 12:3-4). By omitting the understanding that the law could be transcended in extenuating circumstances, but normally should be followed, he leads us to believe that the breaking of the law by David was common. A fuller exegesis reveals extenuating circumstances (possible starvation), and this act being a "one time" solution—not a precedence indicating that all may do this from now on. In this instance I feel evidence shows that Fletcher is not completely true to the text he uses. By neglecting a fuller understanding of the passage, the added dimension or insight that one could gain cannot get through to give a more overall feel for the place for laws in society.

I believe a good concluding warning statement for this section is made by Wilford Cross:

> Once you have set aside as irrelevant the guiding structures of law on the objective side and conscience and values of the subjective side, and reduced morality to an issue of love applied to situations, you are navigating in channels which have not been mapped and buoyed.[44]

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[44]Cox, p. 75.

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES AND CONSTANTS

I am never quite sure what word should be used to denote the universal elements. The words law and principles have become such objectionable words in many circles that I should like to find some fresh words. I am speaking, of course, about the broadly based objectives that help to determine concrete decisions and other normative criteria which are brought to the concrete situation. It is my view that this whole discussion is a matter of emphasis and that those who try to turn it into an absolute choice between the context with and the context without the use of these objectives or criteria, laws or principles, are creating a situation that is quite unreal.[1]

There seems to be considerable ambiguity in what principles, etc, are. Most of us use these terms, yet if questioned on what they mean, we would not agree on the same definition. It is important to establish an acceptable understanding of all terms in order to understand how Joseph Fletcher uses them.

In order to get the feel of these terms we should first look at reference sources, then see how a few ethicists define these terms.

A. WHAT ARE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND ULTIMATE CONSTANTS?

The Oxford English Dictionary gives several uses of the term "principle." The definitions are as follows:[2]

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[1]*Storm Over Ethics* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1967), p. 1.

[2]"Principles," in James A. H. Murray (ed.) *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), VII, 1376.

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1) Principle--Origin, source, source of action.
2) That from which something takes its rise, originates, or is derived; a source; the root.
3,4) In generalized sense: A--fundamental source from which something proceeds; a primary element, force, or law which produces or determines particular results; the ultimate bases upon which the existence of something depends; B--cause in the widest sense.
5,6) A--Fundamental truth, law, or motive force. A fundamental truth or proposition, on which many others depend; B--a primary truth comprehending, or forming the basis of various subordinate truths; a general statement or tenet forming the ground of, or held to be essential to, a system of thought or belief; a fundamental assumption forming the basis of a chain of reasoning.
7) A--General law or rules adopted or professed as a guide to action; a settled ground or basis of conduct or practice; a fundamental motive or reason of action, especially one consciously recognized and followed. B--An inward or personal law of right action, personal devotion to right; rectitude, uprightness, honourable character.

Thinking about the meaning of "principle" in the discipline of ethics, all the above definitions could be a part of the meaning of this term.

John Dewey alsr recognizes this problem of ambiguity in the use of this term. He c'arifies the use of the term "principle," and differentiates between "principles" and "rules."

It is clear that the various situations in which a person is called to deliberate and judge have common elements, and that values found in them resemble one another. It is also obvious that general ideas are a great aid in judging particular cases. If different situations were wholly unlike one another, nothing could be learned from one which would be of any avail in any other. But having like points, experience carries over from one to another, and experience is intellectually cumulative. Out of resembling experiences general ideas develop; through language, instruction, and tradition this gathering together of experiences of value into generalized points of view is extended to take in whole people and races. Through intercommunication the experience of the entire human race is to some extent pooled and crystallized in general ideas. These ideas constitute principles. We bring them with us to deliberation on particular situations.[3]

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[3] John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), p. 304.

Dewey then feels that there is a common denominator of human experience that, if all are aware, may be drawn upon to guide human behavior. He does not seem to put values, good or bad, on these "common human experiences," but acknowledges that they are available for humankind. He calls these ideas, derived from humankind's experiences, principles.

A third reference also acknowledges the difficulty in defining what principles are. He characterizes it as a problem within the field of ethics.

> The disagreements we encounter concerning moral issues often seem to involve deep matters of principle which leave no common ground between the disputants. This is sometimes referred to as the problem of disagreement about ultimate moral principles.[4]

A. Phillips Griffiths continues,

> The morality of principles and rules is sometimes contrasted with the morality of sensibility, which emphasizes such virtues as sympathy and integrity as against a rigid code of behavior. In either kind of morality, however, particular judgements will have to be made, based on a view of the situation in which the agent acts, and some factors in the situation will have to be regarded as reasons for acting in one way rather than another. There is, therefore, a more general sense of 'moral principle,' which can be regarded as common to both views, in which a moral principle indicates some factor which is generally relevant to what ought to be done. Moral principles can then be regarded as statements picking out those factors of situations which can be appealed to as moral reasons.[5]

Griffiths is saying that even though the morality of principles and rules is contrasted with the morality of sensibility, there is still a commonness between these two in the sense of "moral principle."

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[4]A. Phillips Griffiths, "Ultimate Moral Principles: Their Justification," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), VIII, 177.

[5]*Ibid.*

This commonness is in factors that are "generally relevant to what ought to be done." He concludes his article with a summary saying that the principles we are able to pick out are factors of moral relevance. These factors require justification. In this justification we are led to more general principles, which at times will not be able to be justified. These then are ultimate principles--they are not justifiable objectively. Griffiths therefore distinguishes between principles and ultimate principles by the fact that ultimate principles cannot be broken down any further.

Peter A. Bertocci and Richard M. Millard distinguish between principles and law. Both feel that people confuse moral principles with five dynamics active in society; customs, legal enactments, scientific law, principles of scientific investigation, and principles of rational action. They feel society establishes commonness through principles. Customs are developed and accepted by the majority in a particular society.

> If moral principles be identified with customary law, then the cultural relativist is correct. Unless we are to engage in a vicious ethnocentrism and assert that our present customs ought to be the customs of all people (a position not without its advocates even in such an august body as the United States Senate), we would have to admit that what is customarily right is wholly relative to the group to which the custom belongs.[6]

The more important aspects of custom within society, are enacted into civil law. These laws are enforced because of general consensus of the population, and they remain law until there is a

[6]Peter A. Bertocci and Richard M. Millard, *Personality and the Good* (New York: McKay, 1963), p. 414.

consensus for change. To confuse these laws with moral principles, makes those who oppose these laws immoral. Therefore there is a need to objectively place legal enactments into perspective with respect to principles.

Bertocci and Millard say that the third meaning of law (as distinct from principles) is scientific law, empirically derived from the natural world. These laws are observations by individuals attempting to objectively record phenomena of nature. They express not what ought to be, but what is, as observed under conditions that ideally do not interfere with or affect nature. These observations are generalizations about what is happening under existing conditions. Many times these generalizations are "ideal" in that the best conditions must exist for a certain thing to happen. Take gravity for example. We have observed that dropping a lead weight and a feather within a complete vacuum (the ideal conditions spoke about) we would see or observe that both objects touch the stopping surface at the same time. Realizing this aspect of nature, we are able to design objects that perform in space, atmosphere, and underwater (rockets, aircraft, and submarines). We cannot equate scientific law to moral principles, but there is a closer relationship than we might believe.

> Although worthiness of intent in action and knowledge of the natural order are not equivalent to each other, nor necessarily assurances of each other, the person who attempts to disregard natural scientific law is likely to be, at the least, morally ineffective. The person who has taken lessons in first aid but tries to move a man injured in an accident into his car instead of covering him up warmly and calling for an ambulance may be

responding to his feeling of 'ought to help that man,' but he is certainly running counter to the laws of physiology that he presumably studied in his course on first aid.[7]

"Principles of scientific investigation" is the fourth dynamic Bertocci and Millard examine.

> Another positive relation between natural scientific law and moral principles calls for special note and offers an important clue to the possible character of moral principles themselves. The very possibility of the discovery of scientific natural law and the extention of scientific knowledge depends upon recognition by the scientist or investigator of certain more or less invariable norms or ideals or principles as obligating him as a scientist. These principles are the very conditions of the possibility of scientific investigation itself.[8]

Scientists must approach their investigation open-mindedly, without predetermined results. This open-mindedness must exist throughout the whole investigation even though results may disprove long believed values.

> Both authors feel
>
> these conditions or principles of scientific investigation are not themselves scientific laws, that is, descriptive generalizations discovered by scientists in events. The norms of scientific method are not, like the law of gravitation, found or observed in events that occur whether we like it or not. Neither are they, nor can they be, simply laws that we legislate for ourselves. In fact, one of the surest means of stifling scientific investigation has been the attempt to legislate or legally decree how scientists shall proceed and the conclusions they shall draw.[9]

These principles of scientific investigation are not customs of scientists, or cultures either.

> They are guiding lines that scientists propose to follow even before they know that they will lead to the discovery of truth in any particular scientific investigation. This experience

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[7]*Ibid.*, p. 416. [8]*Ibid.* [9]*Ibid.*, p. 417.

of previous scientists or investigators has suggested these lines of procedures to scientists who were anxious to improve their procedures, but they were not (a) forced on them as 'gravitation' is, nor (b) were they simply arbitrary inventions. Whether a scientist is a Hottentot, a Bostonian, or a Muscovite is irrelevant. In this sense the principles of scientific investigation are universal, not as divorced from all scientists, but as the condition of being a scientist anywhere or anytime. Not only are the conditions of the possibility of scientific investigation universal; in the nature of the case they have to be self-imposed if they are imposed at all. In this sense they constitute specific 'oughts' and not 'musts.'[10]

Bertocci and Millard both feel the Stoics of ancient time

recognized the relationship between scientific law and natural law.

They were aware that man's ability to see connections, bring order and

meaning into his life was because of reason.

Reason, then, not only consists of the principles that guide our investigation of Nature but it imposes upon the reasoner his own discovered limitations. The Stoics drew a most interesting additional conclusion from this acknowledgement. Because for the Stoics, our own nature is a part of Nature, to use reason to investigate Nature is itself a fulfillment of a law of Nature in us. The result of investigation is the discovery of the laws of Nature or its ordering principles--what the Stoic called 'reason' of Nature, including man.[11]

The last area examined is "principles of rational action."

Socrates felt that the life lived without introspection was not worth

living.

What Socrates saw far more clearly than any of his predecessors and many of his successors was that the life that is not subject to the self-discipline of rational control is a life of internal contradictions, frustrations, chaos, and meaninglessness.[12]

Socrates (as were the Stoics, Plato, and Aristotle) were the initiators

in this realm of "principles of rational action." They felt that man

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[10]*Ibid.*   [11]*Ibid.,* p. 418.   [12]*Ibid.,* p. 419.

was a rational animal. His fulfillment, growth, and being were tied up with his ability to reason.

Bertocci and Millard conclude:

> The quest for moral principles, or principles for guiding moral choice, cannot end in the pressures of customs or in civic or scientific law. The quest is for principles of rational action. We have noted that the principles of scientific investigation hold regardless of, and as the conditions of, whatever particular discoveries scientists make. What we need are similar principles to guide our choices, principles that are applicable to all areas of our lives including the area of scientific investigation. Such principles of reasonable action, like the principles of scientific investigation, have to be self-imposed. But they would be universal oughts and they would be both the human conditions of scientific investigation and the conditions of orderly, intellectual, and meaningful choice. Thus, if there are such things as moral principles, or moral laws, they would be universal principles in accordance with which a potentially rational person ought to make his choices. Only by following these moral laws as well as he can could such a person be considered reasonable in choosing.[13]

The two authors believe then that "questionable" principles are those associated with rational action and universal imperatives of human and scientific investigation.

John Knox differentiates between principles and rules saying,

> Principles, as I understand the term in this connection, differ from rules in two respects: they are more general and inclusive, and they are more concerned than 'rules' are with inner spirit or intention. But are 'principles' any less mandatory? Are not 'principles' as well as 'rules' concerned with obligations?[14]

Knox relates principles to the inner spirit and feels they are more general (and inclusive) truths that we discover.

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[13]*Ibid.*, p. 420.

[14]John Knox, *The Ethics of Jesus in the Teachings of the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), pp. 40-41.

There seems to be a bit more of a problem in defining what universals are. Disputes over defining universals date back as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Gordon Leff says,

> the problem of universals concerned the status and relation of genera and species to the individuals belonging to them. What was the nature of terms like 'animal' or 'man' and where were they to be found in the world of individual animals and men? Those like Roscelin of Compiegne (C. 1050-1125), who replied that universals were nothing but names which consisted in mere sound . . . were nominalists. For them only actual individuals were real. Universals were the terms designating them. At the other extreme were those who, like William of Champeaux (1070-1121), endowed universals with an essence of their own and treated them as the foundation of all individual existence. On this view, universals were prior to individuals as the condition of their existence. As upheld in its extreme form by William of Champeaux, a species was at once fully present in each of its individuals and common to them.[15]

Peter Abelard (1079-1142), a former student of both Roscelin and William of Champeaux, resolved the dispute. His answer to the problem of universals was to treat them as terms without reverting to pure nominalism. He also believed that a universal could describe several individuals. Leff illustrates this saying,

> Thus the species 'man' refers not to an essence 'humanity' but to something which shares the state of being a man: it connotes 'to be man.' Accordingly Abelard concluded that the mind reached this universal notion through abstracting it from actually existing individuals. In itself the genus or species did not exist outside the mind; but the mind was able to discover it through individual things. For that reason the universal was known only in a blurred and general way. Unlike say, the individual tower which was known for itself, the species 'tower' referred to no tower in particular and so lacked the definition which was the property of individual knowledge.[16]

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[15]Gordon Leff, "Nominalism-Realism," in Alan Richardson (ed.) *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 232.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 233.

Richard Aaron, professor of philosophy, feels that the term universal has been a battleground in defining for a long time. He says there are seven ways in which the universal has been regarded:

> (1) an object existing in its own right (sometimes as the most permanent of all existences; (2) a concept nascent in the mind and thus subjective; (3) a word or series of words; (4) an identical quality, or group of qualities; (5) a recurring resemblance; (6) that which can be predicted of each and every individual in a species or all species in a genus and; (7) a principle of classification. To complicate the issue even further the universal has at times been identified with the species, the genus, and the class.[17]

A. D. Woozley gets to the problem of defining universals.

He says:

> That in some sense or other there are universals, and that in some sense or other they are abstract objects--that is, objects of thought rather than of sense perception--no philosopher would wish to dispute; the difficulties begin when we try to be more precise. They may be indicated (although not defined) by the abstract nouns which we use when we think about, for example, beauty, justice, courage, and goodness and, again, by the adjectives, verbs, adverbs and prepositions which we use in talking of individual objects, to refer to their qualities and to the relations between them. In saying of two or more objects that each is a table, or square, or brown, or made of wood we are saying that there is something common to the objects, which may be shared by many others and in virtue of which the objects may be classified into kinds. Not merely is such classification possible, for scientific and other purposes; it is unavoidable: all experience is of things as belonging to kinds, however vague and inarticulate the classification may be. Whatever we see (to take sight as an example) we see as *a something*--that is as an object of a certain kind, as having certain qualities, and as standing in certain relations to other objects-- and although every individual object is unique, in that it is numerically distinct from all others, its features are general, in that they are (or might be) repeated in other objects. . . . Universals are, by tradition, contrasted with particulars, the

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[17]Richard I. Aaron, "Universals," *Encyclopedia Americana* (1969), XXVII, 776.

general contrasted with the numerically unique, and differing theories of universals are differing accounts of what is involved in this generality and in our experience of it.[18]

Woozley then feels that when we talk in generalities, we seem to be able to talk the same "language," but as we try to become more specific on terms such as beauty, justice, goodness, and so forth, we begin to start talking about different things.

The last type of constant, principle or universal that should be examined is what I call "ultimate constants." These are physical factors that affect all persons: men, women, and children, no matter what culture, what sex, what belief, what religion. These factors affect individuals differently, yet are common in that all of us are affected by them. They not only affect our everyday decision-making, but also our state of emotional and physical health, which ultimately plays an integral part (consciously or unconsciously) in our decision-making "model."

The first constant within this scheme of ultimate constants is Death. This may be symbolic death, in the sense of closing oneself off from others. It may be initiated by the individual (doing something unforgivable to another deliberately or undeliberately), consciously or unconsciously or reasons and/or feelings known or unknown only to the initiator. Alienation, separation, and eventually symbolic death (noncaring, indifference) may result. This physical feeling of symbolic death affects us (to different degrees) in our

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[18]A. D. Woozley, "Universals," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), VIII, 194.

relationships in life, and in our decision-making, problem-solving
orientation each moment of the day.

Another aspect of Death is spiritual death. This is the death
involved in our not being "at one" with our "higher being," God, or
deity. Spiritual death may be premeditated, or accidental. With
premeditation the individual knowingly or consciously rejects that
ultimate being because of not being able to experience its existence,
and in all awareness, rejects its existence.

The accidental spiritual death is entered into unknowingly,
unconsciously. The distraction of our "being" by different aspects
of life (i.e. material security, emotional security, physical security)
may cause us to forget (if these other needs are more pressing) the
spiritual "need" of our "being" thus helping us to lose the sensi-
tivity we had, and helping us unknowingly slip into a spiritual death.
This spiritual death whether premeditated or accidental, manifests
itself in our everyday being. It shows up in all of us in our
decision-making, our problem-solving, and our relationships with
humankind. The way in which it manifests itself differs from individual
to individual, yet there is a commonness in this for all humankind.

The last aspect of Death is literally, physical death. This
is the death experienced either accidentally or naturally, defined in
terms of a termination of the heartbeat, a termination of the pulse,
a termination of the breathing, and recently, a termination of the
brainwaves. The dynamic system comes to rest, to a static position.
This knowledge of finiteness, when experienced or realized, may

drastically alter human (as well as animal) behaviour. When death is encountered accidentally (as in being run down by an automobile), the "being" has little time to react and change behaviour. When death is encountered through a more gradual decline (i.e. symptoms of the body dying such as heart attacks, senility, arthritis, etc.) the "being" has time to react and to effect changes in thinking and living, thus affecting decisions, problem-solving, relationships with others, and all aspects of spiritual relationships. For example, an eighty-five year old person is not apt to (materially) make available a large sum of money in an investment that will mature in forty years (unless investing for others). Young individuals make these commitments everyday (materially we invest in homes, farm equipment, automobiles, etc.) for long periods of time. Yet when mortality is experienced, behaviour, concepts of decision-making, and other aspects of life are changed.

The second ultimate constant that we should be aware of is Life. This is subdivided into three parts, religious, secular, secular-religious. This Life is the way in which humankind relates its deity with the way it lives.

Religious life describes the individual that has total awareness of his deity. There are degrees of awareness with respect to maturity, yet the commitment in Life is to that deity, and this forms the basis of human relationships in existence. With this dedication of life to deity, the individual's life is affected to different degrees depending on maturity (in the sense of the depth relationship

with the deity). Commitments can be from a monk in a monastery to a totally dedicated layperson symbolically living a monastic life in a secular setting (both depth relationships). Obviously decisions and actions involving the secular world are affected by beliefs and are manifested in a mode or style of living Life.

As the individual's role in life may be dedicated to his deity, so may it be dedicated to an extremely secularist life style. This describes the individual whose life is dedicated to a role which totally ignores any existence of a deity in the universe. These people are totally immersed in a life, deity-free, and pursue values oriented to themselves, their families, or those they care about. This state of existence often manifests itself in a material seeking orientation that values things over persons. There can be total dedication to the individual's role in life (or vocation), to the exclusion of all other encounters in life. The individual's actions may fit into a spectrum from total self-orientation, to total "self" giving of the religious.

Between these two opposing dedications, is the secular-religious individual. This identifies those who are involved with their deity as well as the secular aspects of life. These persons fluctuate in a spectrum containing their deity, and on the other end, the secular world and its values. Their view of reality and decision-making is made according to their deity's role in their life, their values, their feelings, and comprehension of the situations.

The third ultimate constant is State of Health. All people have a state of health that affects all aspects of their lives. There

are two divisions for health, the actual physical (physiological) health, and the emotional (psychological) state of health.

The physical state of health encompasses everything from arteriosclerosis to amputation. These physical "defects" definitely impair an individual's ability to do certain things, be certain places, thereby playing an important factor in decision-making. All persons may be affected, both rich and poor, Buddhist and Christian, Communist and Capitalist. All must take these "defects" into consideration.

The psychological or emotional state of health is another concrete reality to consider. As physical health may affect the first two constants (Death and Life), so may emotional health. This encompasses a spectrum from insanity to complete "normalcy" or emotional stability. In society, emotional stability is a prerequisite to legality of a contract, whether being brought to court on conviction of murder, or marrying the person you love. Each society demands a norm of emotional stability in order to participate in that society.

B. WHAT ARE FLETCHER'S PRINCIPLES AND CONSTANTS?

On realizing the existence of these principles and universals, one would think that they should be a part of all ethical models. Yet Joseph Fletcher, in using them, is reluctant to admit that they exist. He uses them sparingly in his ethical model. His reason for this is that he believes,

> There are usually two rules of reason used in moral inquiry. One is 'internal consistency,' and nobody has any quarrel with it--a proposition ought not to contradict itself. The other is

'external consistence' (analogy), the principle that what applies in one case should apply in all similar cases. It is around this second canon that the differences arise. . . . Situationists ask, very seriously, if there are even enough cases alike to validate a law to support anything more than a cautious generalization.[19]

Establishing that there are not any principles (except love) Fletcher continues,

all else, all other generalities (e.g., 'One should tell the truth' and 'One should respect life') are at most only maxims, never rules. For the situationists there are no rules--none at all.[20]

Fletcher thus believes that at most, principles are "generalities" for or on humankind. The purpose of these "generalities" does not contradict the basic issue: "It is right or wrong to follow a principle only according to who gets hurt, and how much."[21]

Joseph Fletcher's thoughts on universals are,

There are no 'universal laws' held by all men everywhere at all times, no consensus of all men. Any precepts all men can agree to are platitudes such as 'do the good and avoid the evil' or 'to each according to his due.' What is good, when and how, and what is due, is always widely debated in theory and hotly debated in concrete cases.[22]

In conclusion, on universals, Fletcher asks the question, " . . . is their any real 'law' of universal weight? The situationists think not."[23]

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[19]Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 32.

[20]*Ibid.,*, p. 55.

[21]*Ibid.,* p. 144.

[22]*Ibid.,* p. 76.

[23]*Ibid.,* p. 146.

We can flatly say, then, that Joseph Fletcher does not believe in any universal law or principle (with one exception--love) taken from generalities on humankind. What then, of the properties of universals or principles, i.e. good, bad, justice, etc? "Good and evil are extrinsic to the thing or action. It all depends on the situation."[24] "Value, worth, ethical quality, goodness or badness, right or wrong--these things are only predicates, they are not properties."[25] Therefore principles, rules and universals are not part of the situation ethic--their only use being that they are treated as maxims or guidelines, not as laws or precepts.

It has been noted that Fletcher's one exception to universals, principles, laws, or rules is love. Fletcher says, "There is only one thing that is always good and right, intrinsically good regardless of the context, and that one thing is love."[26] He qualifies this, saying,

> But love is not substantive--nothing of the kind. It is a principle, a 'formal' principle, expressing what type of real actions Christians are to call good. (Exactly the same is true of justice.) It is the only principle that always obliges us in conscience. Unlike all other principles you might mention, love alone when well served is always good and right in every situation. Love is the only universal.[27]

As Fletcher disclaims any universal or principle as law, so he disclaims any derivation of the one ultimate principle he has--love.

> We might say, from the situationist's perspective that it is possible to derive general 'principles' from whatever is the one and only universal Law (*Agape* for Christians,

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[24]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

[26]*Ibid.*.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 60.

[27]*Ibid.*

something else for others), but not laws or rules. We cannot make universals from a universal.[28]

As to the derivatives from love, value seems to play an important role. He says,

> There are no 'values' in the sense of inherent goods-- value is what happens to something when it happens to be useful to love working for the sake of persons.[29]

> Persons--God, self, neighbor--are both the subjects and the objects of value; they determine it to be value, and they determine it to be value for some person's sake. It is a value because somebody decided it was worth something.[30]

> Hence it follows that in Christian situation ethics nothing is worth anything in and of itself. It gives or acquires its value only because it happens to help persons (thus being good) or to hurt persons (thus being bad).[31]

Fletcher explains how love manifests itself and how it originates:

> Only in the divine being, only in God, is love substantive. With men it is a formal principle, a predicate. Only with God is it a property. This is because God is love. Men who are finite, only do love. That is, they try in obedience to obey love's command to be like God, to imitate him.[32]

C. IS FLETCHER TRUE TO HIS CONCEPT OF PRINCIPLES?

In substantiating his position biblically, Fletcher says, "Only the commandment to love is categorically good. 'Owe no one anything, except to love one another.' (Romans 13:8).[33]

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

No, the plain fact is that love is an empirious law unto itself. It will not share its authority with any other laws, either natural or supernatural. . . . The pericope Matthew 12:1-8 (and parallels Mk. 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5) left no doubt about Jesus' willingness to follow the radical decisions of love. He puts his stamp of approval on the translegality of David's paradigm or exemplary act: 'Have you never read what David did when he was . . . hungry, he and those who were with him: . . . .' At least the Christ of the Christian ethic leaves no doubt whatsoever that the ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else.[34]

The last scriptural reference of Fletcher is:

The faith comes first. The Johannine proposition (I John 4:7-12) is not that God is LOVE, but that GOD is love! The Christian does not understand God in terms of love; he understands love in terms of God as seen in Christ. 'We love, because he first loved us.' This obviously is a faith foundation for love. Paul's phrase (Gal. 5:6), 'faith working through love,' is the essence and pith of Christian ethics.[35]

These three biblical references (I John 4:7-12, Matt. 12:1-8, and Romans 13:8) seem to be the core or backbone of Fletcher's biblical authority. I feel it wise to see if Fletcher's understanding of these texts fit in with the 'generally accepted' understanding of them by biblical exegeti.

I John 4:7-12 states:[36]

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

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[34]*Ibid.*, p. 85.   [35]*Ibid.*, p. 49.

[36]Bible. *The Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1485.

Fletcher uses this text as an authority in order to show that GOD is love, not that God is LOVE. He says that Christians should understand God in terms of love (as understood in this text). Normally Christians understand love in terms of God. Fletcher's distinction is that GOD is composed of love. It is elemental in Him, it is His composition.

On I John 4:7-5:13, Kümmel states,

> In the third course of thought (4:7-5:13), love and faith connect the lines of the meditation, in that in 4:7-21 love based upon faith and in 5:1-13 faith based upon love prove to be the makers of being engendered by God.[37]

Therefore 4:7-12 is a part of the total message the author is offering us. This total message has to do with the love and faith and our relationship to God.

Massey Shepherd discusses I John 4:7-5:3 saying,

> In the preceding sections the author has developed his themes with reference to the dictum that God is light. He has reiterated that the truth of God and knowledge of him cannot be separated from the character of daily living in obedience to his righteous commandments.[38]

Shepherd feels that in I John the argument is turned about with reference to God is love. He (author of I John) says many things about truth and repeats them about love. The Christian's life and beliefs are closely linked.

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[37]Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kümmel (eds.) *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 307.

[38]Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., "The First Letter of John," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 938.

As a man believes, so he lives. As a man lives, so is his real belief. The initiative is always from God. He loved first. He sent his Son to expiate our sins, to be our Saviour. He has given us his Spirit. So if we believe in him, confess him, and show our love for him by loving our brethren, we may confidently face the coming judgement without fear. To live in love is to live victoriously over all error and all anxiety.[39]

Paul W. Hoon discusses I John 4:7-12 saying,

The word love is used as a noun or verb twenty-five times in vss. 6-21, and the concept it expresses--like a symphonic theme with variations--receives here the most beautiful and profound treatment of any passage in the epistle. But observe the concern that leads the mind of the elder to compose our present passage, and the thought with which he begins and concludes it, . . . The implication of this injunction culminates in the author's outstanding contribution to Christian theology-- the doctrine that God is love. At the same time the author's purpose is predominately hortatory and ethical rather than theological. He is first commanding love, not speculating about God. John's mystical apprehension of the nature of God rises to its height in this passage, but still it is informed with intense ethical concern.[40]

Fletcher seems in general agreement on the meaning of this passage with biblical scholars. Yet he does not touch the depth of meaning of this passage with respect to his use of it. He uses this scripture as supportive to his argument, but his exegesis of it is weak. Fletcher seems to pick the "stereotype" use of this passage (literal interpretation) which seems to weaken his support rather than strengthen it, because of his lack of in-depth understanding of the passage.

The second verse is in Romans 13:8. Fletcher's quote of this

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[39]*Ibid.*

[40]Paul W. Hoon, "The First . . . Epistle of John: Exposition," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), XII, 278.

verse is, "Owe no one anything, except love one another."[41] The *whole*

verse actually reads, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another;

for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."[42]

Edwin Cyril Blackman ties vss. 8-10 together in what Paul is

saying (contrary to Fletcher) to the Romans, in chapter 13. He says,

> The Christian is to discharge all his obligations, whether
> of public duty or of private relationships. Here the keynote
> is love. Paul's emphasis on the primacy of love for the fellow
> man accords perfectly with the teachings of Jesus.   . . . It
> should be noted here that Paul, in spite of his earlier state-
> ments about tyranny of the law . . . , can speak of its being
> fulfilled. There is no question of self-contradiction. The
> Christian is equipped to fulfill the law's demand by his endow-
> ment with the Spirit (8:4).[43]

A last source speaking on Romans 13:8 suggests,

> Love the Fulfillment of the Law--8a. This same idea is
> expressed in the first clause of this section: Owe no one
> anything--i.e., do not continue in a state of owing and of
> the obligations referred to in vs. 7 (or for that matter, any
> others); rather fulfill and discharge them. Get rid of all
> debts, not by denying, ignoring, or evading them, but by
> paying them; there is only one debt of which one can never
> get rid--the debt of love.[44]

John Knox continues,

> The phrase 'love one another' ordinarily suggests a rela-
> tionship within the church (so in John 13:34); perhaps Paul has
> the community primarily in mind here, but certainly he is thinking
> also of all the Christian's relationships. Having paid one's
> obligations to one's neighbor, according to every human standard,

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[41]Fletcher, p. 26.   [42]Bible, p. 1373.

[43]Edwin Cyril Blackman, "The Letter of Paul to the Romans," in
The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible (Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 790.

[44]John Knox, "The Epistle to the Romans: Exegesis," in *The
Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), IX,
605-6.

one still, as a Christian, owes him love--the meaning of which
no conceivable list of our obligations or of other peoples 'dues'
can possibly exhaust. Such is plainly the implication of vs. 8a;
but the subsequent discussion takes a slightly different turn.[45]

In vss. 8b-10 the author continues saying that Paul's love of neighbor

covers each separate requirement of the Ten Commandments. He says

that 'fullness of the law' is not only explicit demands, but all of

what God will s for us. And this cannot necessarily be drawn up in

legal form.

The last of Fletcher's scriptural references is Matthew 12:1-8.

There seems to be quite a divergence between other exegeticists and

Fletcher in the interpretation of these verses. Fletcher feels the

point of these verses are "At least the Christ of the Christian ethic

leaves no doubt whatsoever that the ruling norm of Christian decision

is love: nothing else."[46] Howard C. Kee says of Matthew 12:1-14,

Controversy Concerning the Sabbath. Two stories are here
reproduced from Mark 2:23-3:6, both of which have as their
point the question of Jesus' violation or condoning violation
of the sabbath law, one of the most sacred and distinctive of
all Jewish institutions. In neither incident is there a problem
that the afflicted persons involved will die if their needs are
not met instantly. Rather the hungering disciples could surely
survive until later in the day and the crippled man could have
waited until the next day to be healed. But Jesus faces the
issue. The force of the stories in the form in which Matthew
has produced them is the lordship of Jesus over the sabbath, as
vs. 8 declares explicitly.... 12:8. Matthew has omitted the
statement in Mark 2:27 that the sabbath was made for man.
Although some scholars think that Jesus' original statement
was that it is Jesus as the Son of man who exercises rightful
authority over even such venerable institution as the sabbath.[47]

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[45]*Ibid.*

[46]Fletcher, pp. 85-6.

[47]Howard Clark Kee, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 623-4.

May and Metzger say of Matthew 12:1-14, in verse 2,

> The objection rested on the traditional interpretation
> that plucking grain by hand was an activity forbidden by Ex. 20.
> 8-11. . . . 5: Since no penalty was exacted from those who set
> aside provisions of the law for the sake of some human need or
> some more significant service to God, Jesus' disciples eat
> because of their need and serve him who is greater than the
> institutions of the law.[48]

In verse 8,

> Jesus claims, by virtue of his mission as the Messiah,
> authority over man's obedience to God. 11-12: The Rabbis
> agreed with the principle of attending to accidental injury
> and danger on the sabbath, but they thought that chronic
> conditions should wait. . . . For Jesus it was important to
> restore a person to useful life.[49]

Buttrick supports the first two sources saying,

> Jewish law and sacred history showed that there are higher
> claims than the claims of law. A preacher may learn from the
> reply of Christ to answer men with their arguments rather than
> with his own--and with the better argument of a life of righteous
> love. Jesus thus raises and meets the whole issue of law versus
> life. It is a frequent dilemma for any follower of Christ.
> . . . There is threat as well as protection in all law. It may
> set rules in the place of the holy reflection, and thus encourage
> irresponsibility. It may cabin righteousness, . . . and thus
> lower conscience to mere respectability. . . . Always it is an
> irritant, always a judgement, and it may subtly induce the view
> of God which sees in him only a lawmaker and a judge. Human
> destiny in God is higher than law. . . . Jesus, the revelation
> of man's destiny by grant of pardon and power, is lord of (law
> and) the sabbath.[50]

Looking back on I John 4:7-12, it would seem that biblical

scholars and Fletcher are pretty much in agreement on the meaning or

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[48]Bible, p. 1185.

[49]*Ibid.*

[50]George A. Buttrick, "The Gospel According to Matthew: Exposition," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), VII, 392.

point of this passage. He does not distort the meaning of the passage in order to have it say what he needs it to say. In Romans 13:8 and Matthew 12:1-8, we encounter problems. Fletcher quotes only one-half of Romans 13:8, thereby cutting the verse in half, and also takes it at face value for meaning. Taking it at face value would not give the total understanding of what Paul is saying, yet would not hurt quite so bad as leaving the last half off pertaining to law. Fletcher's need to neglect law seems to hinder his ability to give the whole picture with respect to the verse he quotes. In his ethic, Fletcher expresses disappointment in others who do not look at the whole picture, yet it would seem Fletcher does here what he accuses others of doing.

In Matthew 12:1-8, again Fletcher disagrees with others (biblical exegetes). Fletcher seems eager to back his ethic up with scripture, yet because of an appearance of weak scriptural understanding, he does not seem to me inclined to consult authorities on that which he uses as authority. Fletcher feels the point of this scriptural reference is "the ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else." Other authorities interpret 1-8 as pertaining to Jesus and his lordship over the sabbath.

It is a disappointment to see that as well versed as Fletcher is in ethical authorities and arguments, and his valid use of quotations (as much debated in the many books I read on criticism of Fletcher's *Situation Ethics*), that he could be so weak in his use of scripture. I feel in reading Fletcher, one must check biblical quotations and references, and also investigate more thoroughly the meanings of the passages he quotes.

AN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

In developing a model for decision-making, it is important to be aware of how others see the process of arriving at a decision. We are now somewhat familiar with Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics. We have seen, to some extent, his views on antinomianism and legalism. We have also looked at Fletcher's use of principles. I feel it important that we take a formal look at Fletcher's model, observe other models, then construct a model that will, hopefully, synthesize what has been learned through this process.

A. FLETCHER'S MODEL

The key to Fletcher's situation ethics is his one universal constant or principle, which is the standard by which all else is measured. Love is that key for Fletcher. He emphasizes the demand element in love. Love can not only be lenient, but also stringent. When one takes love into consideration, he is putting people in the center of his concern. Things are not of value--just people. Obligations are to people. If we are guided by love, we cannot go wrong.

Taking a closer look at love, Fletcher declares,

But love is not a substantive--nothing of the kind. It is a principle, a 'formal' principle, expressing what type of real actions Christians are to call good. (Exactly the same is true of justice.) It is the only principle that always obliges us

in conscience. Unlike all other principles you might mention, love alone when well served is always good and right in every situation. Love is the only universal.[1]

Breaking this down even further, Fletcher feels that there are four basic questions one must ask himself about each case that he is confronted with. He must think about the end. What are, or will be the end results? What and whom do they serve? Then, if the end results are desirable, does it serve love? What method should be used to seek this end? Next, what motives are involved in seeking this end result? Again, does this serve love? And last, what are the for-seeable consequences? Do they serve love, are they people or persons oriented?

Fletcher then states four presuppositions as guidelines: pragmatism, relativism, positivism, personalism. These should already be a part of our thinking as we ask the four questions.

Along with the four questions and four presuppositions are six propositions that clarify love: the one good, the ruling norm is love, love and justice are the same, love wills the neighbor's good, the end justifies the means, and love's decisions are made situationally.

Putting this together into a diagram or model, Fletcher's decision-making system might look like this (see Diagram 1).

In Diagram 1 the individual is confronted with the situation. In working towards a solution the four presuppositions are a part of his thinking, as are the six propositions. Love is a part of these

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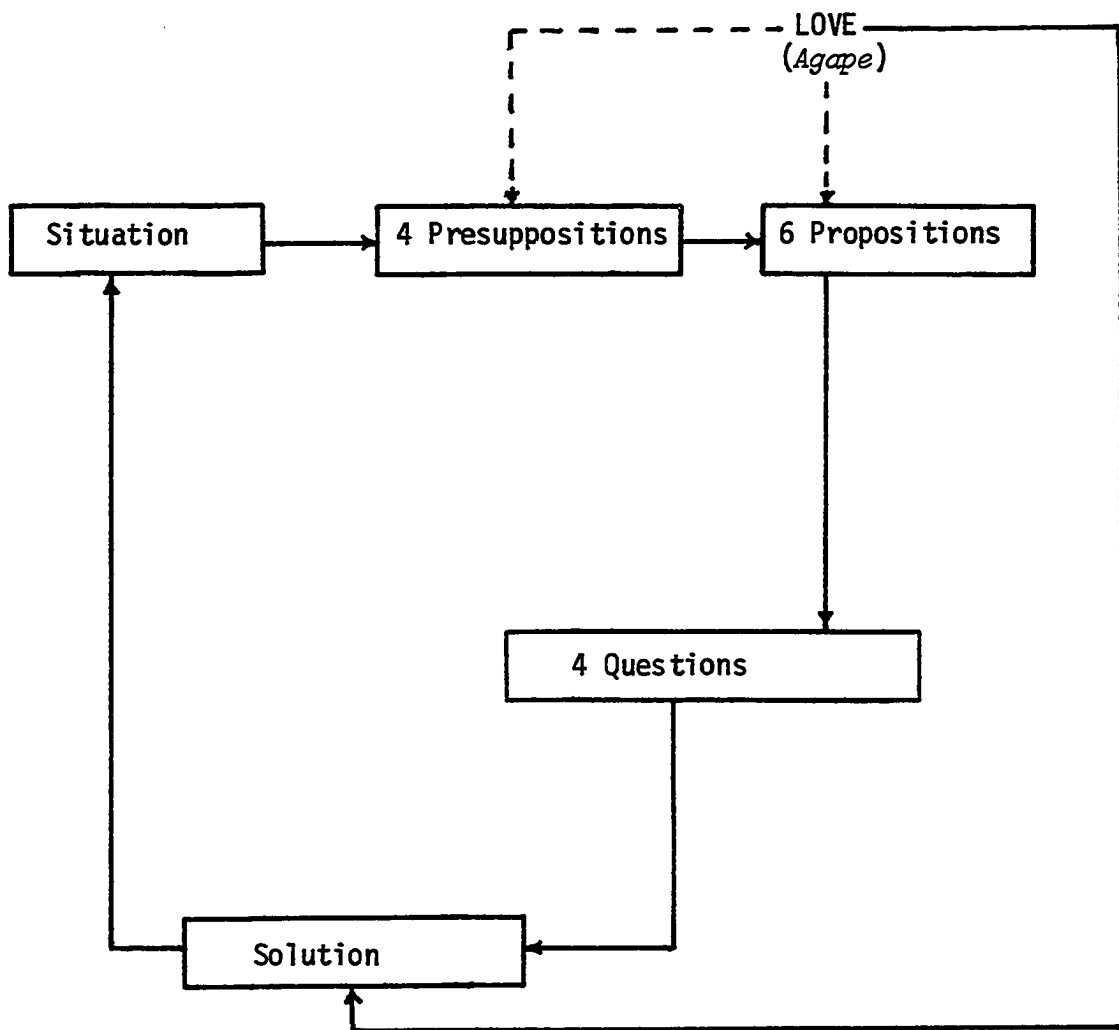[1] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 60.

DIAGRAM 1

(dotted lines) indirectly, for if we accept these, we are working toward a loving solution. With this as a part of our thinking, we ask the four questions, which should lead us towards a solution. Love also feeds directly into the solution (solid line) overriding the solution if it does not serve love after the four questions are asked and a solution determined. Attaining a loving solution resolves the situation.

B. CRITICISM OF FLETCHER'S MODEL

There has been controversy around this ethic that Fletcher advocates. One major criticism seems to be in the area of love. Many feel Fletcher's use of, and definition of love is not adequate. The norm of love by which Fletcher operates, is too nebulous to be helpful. We cannot really define what concern is for others in concrete terms. Another criticism is Fletcher's use of love, to the exclusion of all principles. Setting aside important principles that guide conduct in different situations, is wrong in that these principles may be a guide for love. Others fear man's vulnerability to himself. Some feel that we can talk ourselves into many things in the name of love. There must be ground rules or principles to guide us.

> Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe argues that the new morality has no criteria to distinguish love from what is really self-interest. 'How do you know that what you are doing is loving?' he asks. McCabe also charges that situationism fails to consider that man is always acting within a community that cannot exist without law.[2]

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[2]Harvey Cox (ed.) *The Situation Ethics Debate* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 25.

Another criticism on Fletcher is that his ethic has

a concept of love (that) is arbitrarily pruned and doctored
so as to 'include,' to produce from a conjurer's hat as it were,
the concept of justice, and thus be made to serve as a natural-
istic . . . 'Moral Principle.'[3]

This equating of justice and love is not acceptable. Fletcher sees

the need for love to be prudent in seeking justice, but how can he say

justice is nothing else than love? The question is asked, "Why make

the distinction between love and justice if they are the same?" It

would be better to say that justice is a function of love rather than

equal to love.

A last area of dissension is in the area of practicalness of

making decisions.

Decisions have always been essential to the moral life. But
all along most people, indeed most Christians, have refrained
from decision-making largely because this necessitates thought.
Thus a telling objection to Fletcher's view is that it is alto-
gether impractical. The majority of people are neither willing
nor able to deliberate and decide with the care and rational
foresight demanded by genuine morality.[4]

Going a bit further Barclay says,

There is no doubt that most people do not want to be con-
tinually confronted with the necessity of making decisions.
They would rather have their decisions made for them; they would
rather apply laws and principles to the situation. And it may
well be that people are right.[5]

C. A LOOK AT OTHER MODELS AND THEIR DYNAMICS

Another model, different from Joseph Fletcher's is Paul

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[3]Fletcher, p. 259.   [4]Cox, p. 237.

[5]William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (New York:
Harper & Row, 1972), p. 80.

Kurtz's model or guide to help in decision-making. Kurtz depends

largely on knowledge to make judgements or decisions. There are five

kinds of descriptive knowledge related to this model. Their basis is

an awareness:

> 1) of the particular facts of the situation, 2) of the
> general causal conditions and laws, 3) of the means at our
> disposal and the consequences of our actions, 4) of the
> existing *de facto* values involved, both individually and
> socially, and 5) of the basic needs of man.[6]

Kurtz explains that with the first form of descriptive knowl-

edge, our decisions are unique. Our scientific propositions are

general in nature, but become very specific for practical propositions.

We are continually looking for judgements, beliefs, or principles that

will help us to evaluate our alternatives in order to guide us in a

direction that would be desirable, and acceptable, to ourselves. Our

concerns are the "right now" or the near future. We must be able to

recognize and identify facts and circumstances of each situation.

Kurtz's second concern of general causal conditions and laws

is related to our general body of knowledge. Previous experience

gives us our known beliefs. Scientific knowledge of general conditions

can also affect judgement, in that one has the possibility of being

able to forecast by putting former scientific knowledge together and

reasoning with those facts.

Having an awareness of the means at our disposal and the

consequences of our actions is the third point. Kurtz feels that

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[6]Paul Kurtz, *Decision and the Condition of Man* (Seattle:
University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 241.

merely knowing the facts will not enable us to reach a wise decision. Decision-making is creative, and we must be able to find procedures or plans as a means through which we may act. Technology and "know-how" which civilization has developed is relevant and must be taken into consideration. We must be practical in seeing that what we should do is limited by our ability. Past experience and present anticipation help us predict paths of action. This ties in with the rules of society we follow and the knowledge we gain from society.

Existing *de facto* values involving both individuals and society is the fourth awareness given by Kurtz. Human values are always present in situations, therefore decisions cannot be purely a matter of physical technology. All of our practical decisions are influenced by our motives and attitudes. Decisions involve real problems, and our values are at stake. If our values cannot meet the situation, we may have to compromise or re-evaluate relative to new demands. Another factor that we must consider is our cultural mores. Since we are not isolated from society, cultural mores are especially relevant. Social values that condition us in responding to our environment, together with our psychological concerns and cares, enter into our decisions.

Kurtz's fifth and last awareness is of the basic needs of man. This is directly related to the science of biology and psychology (body and mind). Our knowledge of human needs has a direct effect in helping us make decisions.

Kurtz suggests a mathematical formula of his model, saying

what should be done (d) is a function (f) of human life (H). He describes these in equation form by naming all the components that may be expressed in our decision-making. Kurtz labels his five awarenesses of descriptive knowledge as: F_1, F_2, F_3, F_4, and F_5. In my putting these factors and functions together into equation form, Kurtz's equation should look like this:

$$f \; (d) \; H = \sum_{1}^{n} F_1 + F_2 + F_3 + F_4 + F_5 \; . \; . \; . \; F_n$$

In the above equation, f (d) H is saying (d), what should be done, is a function, f of human life H, and this is equal to the equation that follows it. F_1 through F_n represent the factors Kurtz feels important in making decisions. Assuming the five factors were all that were needed in making a decision (for a specific case, or situation), the equation would end with F_5. The F_n takes into account all possible factors involved in the decision-making process. The summation sign (Σ) indicates that we add all the factors in the equation to come up with f (d) H, our decision. The limits or parameters in which we are able to operate are from one (1) factor in the equation (F_1) to all possible factors (n). This would mean that we add $F_1 + F_2$ etc. all the way to the very last factor involved in our judgement (F_n), into our consideration to guide us into making a decision.

Another approach to decision-making is the James-Lange model. James Lapsley lists the five elements involved in this model as:

1) Reasonable decisions--when arguments for and against a given course have settled and ended by leaving a clear balance in favor of one of the alternatives. 2) A feeling of 'letting ourselves drift' in a direction determined from without with the conviction that, after all, we might as well stand by this course as by another. 3) An accidental determination from within after some suspense because of the absence of imperative principles. In such cases we act automically, as if by spontaneous discharge of our nerves, in the direction of one of the horns of the dilemma. The sense of motion after the pent-up state is so excitent that we eagerly throw ourselves into it. 4) Stimulated from within or without we may suddenly change from an easy and careless mood to a sober and strenuous one (or vice versa) changing the whole scale or our values. 5) We may as if we ourselves by our own willful act inclined the beam, either by adding our effort to the weight of logical reason, which, if taken alone, seemed powerless; or by a creative contribution of something instead of a reason which does a reason's work. This may be subjectively experienced as effort.[7]

Albert Rasmusen, uses another approach in decision-making:

Therefore, in approaching decisions, it is important to begin by standing in the actual ethical situation in which the conflicts of interest stand, and actual alternatives are met.[8]

The facts concerning the structure of relations, the authority and power of those involved, the processes in which policies are being formed and the relationship of members to the policy makers are all of critical importance.[9]

Rasmusen feels that, how a Christian responds to an issue, depends

very much upon the ethical situation and the individual's loyalty to

Christ.

When the Christian enters the decisional situation, he is prepared to respond to the action of God. He believes that God not only touches his subjective life but also transforms

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[7]James Lapsley, *The Concept of Willing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 37.

[8]Albert Rasmusen, *Christian Social Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 192.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 193.

> the objective situation, i.e. the dynamic interplay of
> responses that take place among all persons and groups
> involved.[10]

In other words, Christians must accept (and trust to) divine guidance while making decisions.

Abraham and May Edel, anthropologists, approach ethical decision-making from a more practical standpoint. They say, "The nature of moral decisions itself, however, and the kind of role it plays in morality, is also culturally variable."[11] In looking at this side of man, they feel moral decisions are extremely important in man's view of morality, and responsibility is rooted in practical situations (continually changing) within his life. The Edels point out two types of situations in which moral problems arise for the individual. The first is the temptational situation, the second the genuine decision situation.

Temptational situations (with respect to ethical morality) occur all the time for us. We have strict rules within our society, but we still find people breaking them. Some face the temptation and are able to resist. The ones that give in to a moral transgression, a lot of the time, will rephrase the situation and make different principles relevant. Abraham and May both feel that this is a form of rationalization.

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[10]*Ibid.*, p. 196.

[11]May and Abraham Edel, *Anthropology and Ethics* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University, 1968), p. 142.

The genuine decision situation involves situations where conditions of life are fairly stable and moral principles clearly understood.

> Our culture not only raises many moral problems, and places many burdens of decision upon the individual, but also makes him decide what mode of decision to employ, and it does this in the framework which also emphasizes the deep responsibility of the individual for the choice he makes.[12]

The Edels say it is no wonder that there is a tendency for individuals within our society to seek an "escape from freedom" whether through conventional conformity or authoritarian guides. They bring out that John Dewey caught the problem when he attacked our rigid moral systematizing, saying that it is unworkable.

> Dewey (1929) stressed the uniqueness of the good in every situation and urged avoiding universal rules, since these could be a danger to intelligent appraisal of the full complexity and novel aspects of every concrete situation.[13]

Both agree, that in essence, Dewey's theory uses past experience for the analysis of present situations.

Harvey Seifert develops a three-element decision-making model. The three elements are: 1) a Christian theological perspective, 2) ethical principles, and 3) sociological data.

Seifert feels a Christian theological perspective is derived from the totality of our experiences in life. He says that Christians must have "basic insights about the nature of the whole."[14] Our

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[12]*Ibid.*, p. 145.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]Harvey Seifert, *Power Where the Action Is* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 30.

response of faith is shaped by our belief in God, man's nature and the meaning of his salvation. God is our creator, he is righteous, powerful, and sovereign over us. He is our universal father and loves us. Man has tremendous capabilities for good and evil. Seifert believes man finds his destiny through his purpose for living with a responsible use of the freedom God has given him while serving God. One of the most important theological realities we must be aware of is love. "As God loves us, so we are able to love our neighbors, near and far."[15] Our primary motivation must not be self-interest, but sensitivity to all men's needs with a willingness for great lengths of self-sacrifice when necessary. These concepts have a heavy impact on our moral choice, and add strong motivation for our actions in society. Seifert feels we must have a deep theological roots to make our goals clear, otherwise we cannot have a strong ethic in our personality, thereby creating difficulties when a real test comes.

Seifert's second element is ethical principles, or ethical guidelines. "Principles are general guidelines to action which grow out of religious insight or out of experience in actualizing values."[16] Included with our other guidelines should be love as truth telling, loyalty to our pledged word, the supremacy of the individual over economic goods, liberty, equality, brotherhood, justice, peace, etc. These are guide posts giving us direction relative to the concept of a system of principles that may be applied as a whole. We must give weight to the material, as well as the human values, but keep in mind

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[15]*Ibid.*, p. 31.　　　　[16]*Ibid.*, p. 33.

that human values are number one. We must understand the meaning of our principles, if we are to utilize them in complex situations, and come up with a meaningful interpretation of them, in using love. Seifert continues, saying that each situation is not really as unique as some would have you believe. There are enough likenesses that we may be able to generalize.

The third element in making decisions is any sociological data that we may obtain. Any information that we can observe from our experience or the experience of others, can be a tremendous help in understanding the situation, possible alternative choices, possible consequences of each, and how one can best use *agape* love to remedy the problem. Seifert says we have a wealth of wisdom stored in the Bible and elsewhere, in the form of relevant ethical principles. He adds,

> These remind us, for example, that a proper aim for action is the realization for all men, of economic and social order and opportunity, as a prerequisite to the growth of higher values.[17]

Violence begets evil--we must act realistically and effectively. In a closing note, Seifert is helpful in looking at the larger overwhelming problems we might face,

> Decision-making becomes more manageable also because involvement in momentous universal matters can be broken down into day-to-day actions of individual persons, each in a particular location and vocation.[18]

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[17]*Ibid.*, p. 39.   [18]*Ibid.*, p. 42.

A diagram used by Paul Ramsey, in his book *Basic Christian Ethics*, is presented by Seifert in Diagram 2. Seifert has added to Ramsey's diagram by inserting a third element. He feels, along with Ramsey's type of values and recipient of values, that a time element is important in decision-making. Therefore he has added long-run and short-run consequences. The vertical arrow, representing higher and lower values suggests an arrangement of priorities from physical or material values at the bottom to spiritual (intellectual, moral, esthetic, and religious) values at the top. While all are to be sought as values, when a choice must be made, spiritual values are to be given priority.

The problem of satisfying our own needs, or our neighbor's needs, is represented in the forty-five degree arrow (showing a third dimension) in Diagram 2. If we want to practice *agape* love in our decision-making, we must be aware of our motives for action. We must look at and examine closely our decision-making process as we relate to others. While both self and others have a claim, Ramsey sees Christian ethics as giving priority to the needs of the neighbor. Others might see greater possibility in a form of mutuality in which we receive values at the same time that we relate in or through love to others. We must avoid self-centeredness, but also the other extreme of not being a person within ourself.

The last arrow is Seifert's addition to Ramsey's diagram. The long-run and short-run consequences, adds a time element which should be taken into consideration. The consequences for tomorrow (in

Higher Values

Values for
one's Neighbor

Short-run
Consequences

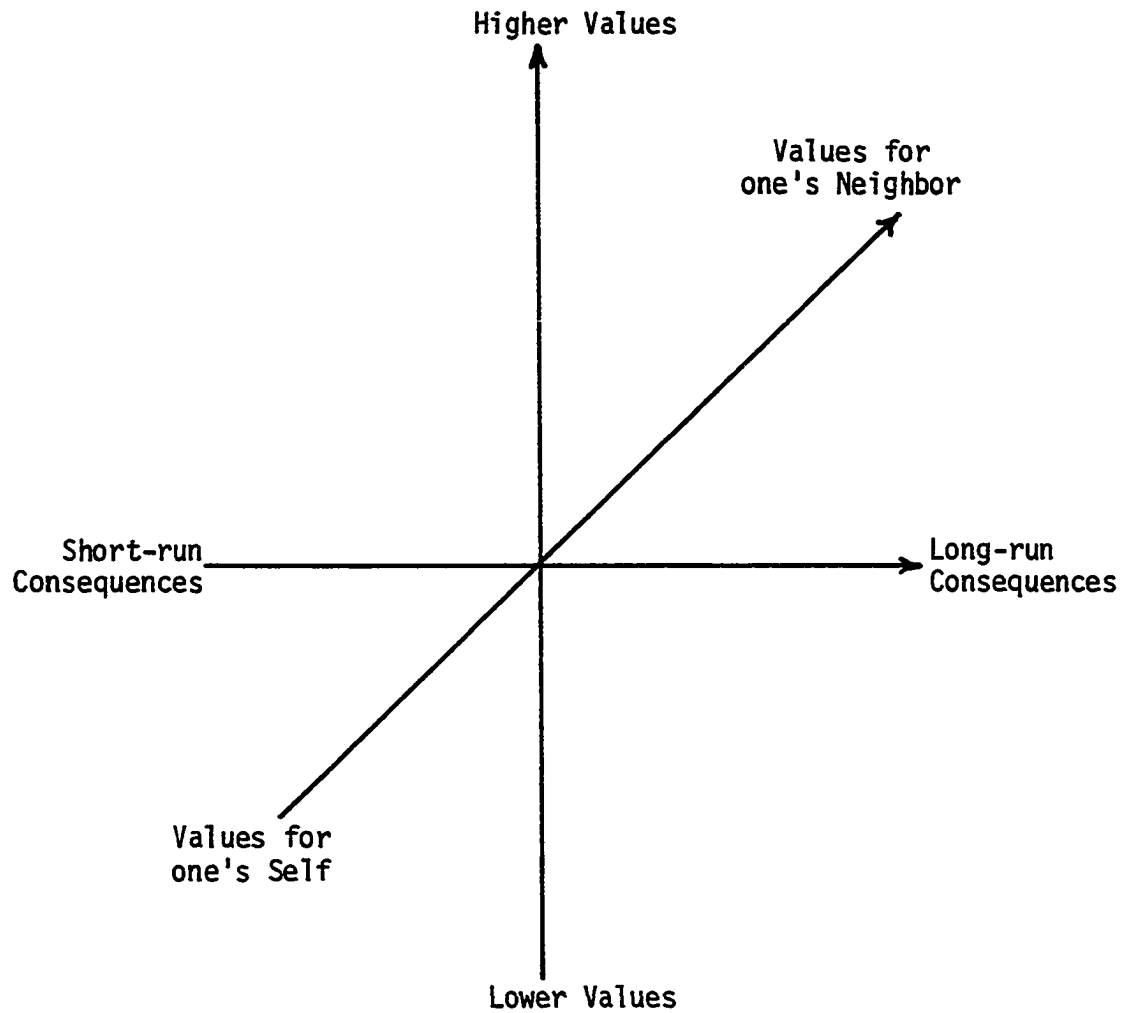Long-run
Consequences

Values for
one's Self

Lower Values

DIAGRAM 2

making a decision today) might not necessarily be good for next year, or ten years from now. An example of this might be the smog "crisis" experienced within cities of the United States in the 1960's and 1970's. The automobile industry (and other industries that contributed to smog) had to be aware of power needs, pollution, production, and profits, yet continued with little change in goals. The automobile industry continued building big cars (energy wasters). The power companies continued building nuclear power plants, supplying short-run and long-run power needs, but not taking into consideration the long-run consequences of disposal of high radiation wastes with half-lives of thousands of years. This did not help the pollution (and smog) problem, the nation's health (lung cancer, and other possible diseases associated with pollution), or effects on plant and animal life. We must, in our decision-making, not only give consideration to our scale of values and priorities among persons now living, but to the time element and possible consequences to future generations while making our decision in the 'now.'

D. A 'BALANCED' MODEL FOR DECISION-MAKING

In thinking through, and developing a model for decision-making, I have come up with nine elements that I feel important (Diagram 3). I am using these elements because of an awareness of inadequacies in the different models I have investigated. This model is a reaction to subjective elements, and attempts to bring awareness and some objectivity into our decision-making.
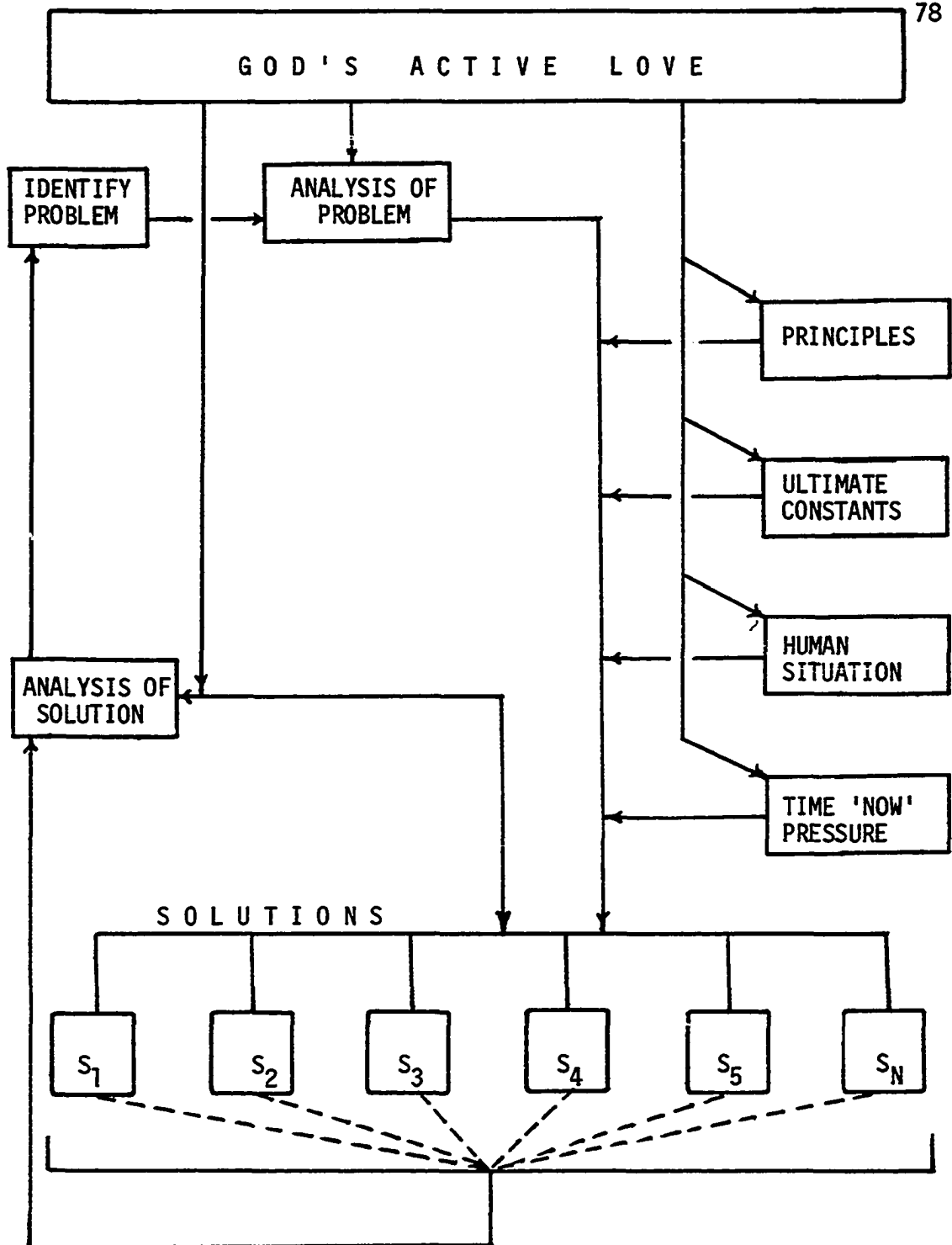
GOD'S ACTIVE LOVE

IDENTIFY
PROBLEM

ANALYSIS OF
PROBLEM

PRINCIPLES

ULTIMATE
CONSTANTS

HUMAN
SITUATION

ANALYSIS OF
SOLUTION

TIME 'NOW'
PRESSURE

SOLUTIONS

S_1 S_2 S_3 S_4 S_5 S_N

DIAGRAM 3

The elements involved (Diagram 3) are: identifying the
problem, (2) an analysis of the problem, (3) the individual's prin-
ciples, (4) the individual's awareness of ultimate constants, (5) the
individual's awareness of the human situation, (6) the pressures of
time acting on the individual, (7) possible solutions to the identi-
fied problem, (8) an analysis of the solution, (9) God's active love
in the system.

One of the larger problems faced by the individual in decision-
making, is identifying the problem. We know that in decision-making
we must choose between alternatives, but we must first know what the
"real" problem is in order to start the decision-making process. We
need to be aware of our problem objectively, so that we have an
"intelligent" awareness. This initial process can help to dissociate
us from feelings of fear, apprehension, jealousy, etc., in order that
we can start thinking constructively about the dilemma. We should
also define the problem in terms of what it is, what it is not, where
it is, how it is, etc. We should know whose problem it is. The
problem might not really be our problem at all. It can be so close
to us subjectively that we accept the problem as ours without realizing
that the individual whose problem it is has the right to solve his own
problem. Who sees the situation as a problem, and who is affected by
it? Does this really make it our problem, or are we making it our
problem? Are our feelings getting us involved when we should not be?

What events led up to the culmination of the problem? Who did
what? Where is the pressure coming from? Is this the first problem

we have encountered with this situation, or individual(s)? If this is a repetition of problems with familiar persons, circumstances, etc., is there any pattern? Are past experiences and relationships subjectively distorting focus on the issues involved? What is the relationship and value of relationships of those you are in conflict with?

The next step, after identifying the problem, is an analysis of the problem. Once we have narrowed down the problem we need to do a similar analysis to that of identifying the problem. What are the parameters of the problem? The problem can appear overwhelming if it is not broken down. It may consist of many "mini" problems. It may have elements in it that are not a part of the problem and need not be taken into consideration.

Miller and Star feel in analyzing the problem, getting "information" can be inadequate if we are just looking for standard forms of communication.

> Information is not limited to standard forms of communication. Written memoranda and verbal exchanges are only one form of information. Blueprints, budgets, part numbers, and so on are other forms. . . . In fact, any characteristic of an operation for a communications network is.[19]

This statement was made in regards to business decision-making, yet it holds true for all forms of decision-making. Look at information other than the standard forms we always depend on. The point is, often we are not aware of information other than the conventional type.

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[19]David W. Miller and Martin K. Starr, *The Structure of Human Decisions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 15.

Therefore, in recognizing the problem and choosing to do something about it, we must start gathering all types of data, and information. As this information is gathered, a system should be devised for classifying it under topics, criteria, or other types of headings in order to integrate and make use of the information.

We must also realize that there is a cost in the solution of the problem. We should define that cost, whether it be in dollars and cents, emotional suffering, emotional happiness (or unhappiness), or whatever. What and where are our values? How do they relate to the situation creating the problem?

Normally problems have many variables. What are the variables? How does each one affect the situation? Are any of them related to each other? Are these variables opinions or facts? Many times facts come in as thinly veiled opinions that serve to complicate rather than clarify.

What are the options open to us? These are not the solutions, but the directions we may go. How will each option affect us, our relationships with God and with others, varied human needs such as security and others? What are the implications of each option? What are our goals and how do these options fit in with them?

What are the time periods we are looking at in our options? Will we decide for the long-run or short-run? How will this affect our options? What time period is important in our options? For a comprehensive analysis it is important that we face these questions.

One last item under "analysis of problem," is our reality.

We do have two types of reality--subjective (within), and objective (without). In this part of our model, we should be dealing with objective reality. Objective reality deals with facts and figures, not feelings. We should be able to separate "that which is," as seen by an objective observer (a person not affected in any way by the problem), and "that which is" (or what we would like it to be) seen subjectively by ourself. Subjective reality is difficult to transcend, and many see it as the only reality. Yet we all can acknowledge that when we are not involved in a situation, there are two realities (or sides) to life situations we become aware of. The importance of objective reality within the situation you are involved in, for a part of the analysis, is very important.

A third element in the model is principles. They exist in us and are both a part of our conscious and unconscious. These principles exist in us and affect our identification, analysis and solution of problems we encounter. Part of these principles are derived from our human experience. From childhood through adulthood we encounter situations, and are able to assimilate consistent methods of solutions. Part of the principles we have are those general truths we have discovered through experience. Miller and Starr feel,

> Society has accumulated an immense store of information concerning the nature of problems, their possible solutions, and approaches to solutions. This wisdom is stored in many forms, including ethical rules, principles, and maxims which warn us to consider certain factors in certain ways--or to proceed at our own risk.[20]

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[20]Robert G. Brown, *Management Decisions for Productions Operations* (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1971), p. 51.

Another aspect of principles that work in us are those we have developed through religious truths learned and accepted. Within this spectrum are moral principles that affect us in relation to our sexuality (and how we use it), our honesty, integrity, and so forth. We accept "mini" principles that may be broken down through individual justification. As we continue along a line of justification for a "mini" principle, we eventually are no longer able to develop justification, and encounter an ultimate principle. Our religious affiliation, and the extent to which our family practices these truths, affect our acceptance and utilization of these developed beliefs. The religious community we are involved in, the depth of commitment to this community and devotion to it in everyday life, also are instrumental in determining the extent of acceptance and practice of these truths. These religious "truths" have been handed down generation after generation, whether it be orally, or in written form (as in the Christian Bible).

The fourth element is ultimate constants. Discussion in an earlier chapter has broken this down into three factors: death, life, and state of health. Death is further subdivided into symbolic, physical, and spiritual death. Symbolic death is the closing off of oneself from others, or society. Physical death is when the body and mind cease to function; all known life ceases. Spiritual death (whether intentional or accidental) is the loss of ability to "experience" or communicate with the Ultimate Deity. All three of these "deaths" affect our identification, analysis, and solution of problems. Without an active deity in an individual's life, pressure falls back

on any principles the individual has developed in the past, to solve existing problems. The maturity of the individual relative to his age, and maturity of principles, are often mismatched. A person dying of cancer (physical death) is faced with enormous decisions about such matters as what to do with his physical assets (in taking care of those he cares about) or what to do about his spiritual life. The mismatching of maturities creates anxieties, fears, depression, etc., and affects the direction decisions go. These fears, anxieties, unhappiness, (or their opposites, such as happiness, contentment) will affect the direction of all solutions to the problem(s) at hand. Symbolic death, the closing of oneself off from others, or alienation from individuals or society, definitely affects decision-making also. Hatred to an individual or group may warp rationality, thereby yielding a decision totally illogical to the situation.

The second factor (under ultimate constants) is life. Life is subdivided into three areas: values dedicated to deity, values not acknowledging a deity, but dedicated to other values of existence, and a combining of both, secular-religious values. The main ingredient in life, with respect to decision-making, is the individual's awareness of that which he dedicates himself to. In being totally dedicated to one's deity, there seems to be an existential awareness of self with decisions being made through communication with the deity. Other factors seem to play a lesser role in influencing any decisions.

Values not acknowledging the existence of a deity can be tied in with dedication to materialism, humanism, vocationism, powerism,

etc. The acceptance of these values, and the total drive to attain them, with conscious belief that a deity does not exist, definitely affect the principles by which one operates. We have many examples in history of individuals totally dedicating themselves to power or materialism, at the expense of all other persons.

Secular-religious dedication occurs when the individual acknowledges the existence of a deity, and lets it affect his life to the degree that he is able to. There is still the dedication to other values (such as power, material goods, humanity, or family), but it is "tempered" by the awareness and extent of communication the individual has with his deity. The relationship between other values and the deity determine the way in which the individual uses principles and other elements in the decision-making process.

The third factor under ultimate constants, is state of health. This is subdivided into two areas: psychological health (mind) and physiological health (body). Our physical state of health, at times, can play a large role in determining the direction we go when faced with a decision. A person totally paralyzed will have different needs than a fully operational person. The decisions each would make are affected to the extent of his or her health impairment.

In the same way, psychological health influences decision-making, whether it be conscious or unconscious. A totally neurotic individual can determine the direction he will go on a decision using one-issue subjective reality, without regard to objective (or other aspects of subjective) rationality, without regards to principles,

possible self-destruction, or any other consideration. An "average"

psychological state of health, allows the individual the freedom to

be aware of other data coming in, and to make the decision that will

meet a larger part of his needs (rather than a specific "fixated"

need). This carries through into the whole decision-making model.

When an extreme state exists within us, it limits our freedom, and our

awareness of other data that may exist, thereby influencing our

decision to a greater degree than other factors that may be equally

important.

The fifth element in this model is the human situation. Within

the human situation exists four groups: feelings, motives, subjective

versus objective reality (assuming a "normal" physical and mental

state of health), and needs.

> Feelings are, of course, very important in personal decisions.
> And a person may try to understand how he feels, or he may try to
> work up certain feelings in himself. But neither of these is
> distinctive of personal decision.[21]

Sidney Zink continues,

> A person understanding of his feelings is distinct from his
> judging their worth. He may try to understand them because he
> believes that he has acted badly through a failure to understand
> them, or because he believes that the best thing he can do under
> certain circumstances is to express his feelings, or to act on
> the basis of his deepest desire (if for example he is choosing
> a wife or vocation).[22]

Zink feels that in these circumstances, the individual will really try

to find out what his feelings are, and not influence them, and he will

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[21]Sidney Zink, *The Concepts of Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's
Press, 1962), p. 13.

[22]*Ibid.*

also be using ethical terms as "predicates" of his feelings.

Franz Brentano states,

It might be suggested that what we are concerned with in such cases is nothing more than a matter of preference; but this is not correct. On the contrary, a man may have a rational preference which conflicts with some passionate desire; the desire may win out, with the result that one decides in favor of the desire, despite the rational preference.[23]

Our feelings cannot be overlooked in the process of our decision-making. They can play an unconscious (large) role in determining a direction we go in a situation. We should attempt objectively to recognize them and put them into perspective within our decision-making process.

Also under "the human situation" is motives. They are another existential aspect of human behavior that we must be aware of. Motives must be objectively put into perspective in order to develop deeper insights, which may be used as data to be added in the overall picture. Objectively being aware of our motives can help us better attain a solution that can be satisfactory for the whole situation. Motives, value wise, should have a "plus" or "minus" attached to them. We may have a bad motive for accomplishing a good act, and by objectively evaluating our motive, we may trigger "better" principles into play through the realization of selfish motivation. This can help to update our data with "quality" data for our decision-making process.

Another aspect of "the human situation" is subjective versus objective reality. Many of us, along with society in its legal

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[23]Franz Brentano, *The Origin of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 114.

structure, acknowledge the existence of more than one reality. We are confronted with this in our courts everyday as two or more parties square off against each other on insignificant, or extremely important issues. Looking at subjective reality, we need to recognize that the reality in which we decide on the innocence or guilt of an act that has not "touched" us, versus an act that "touches" us (whether lightly or deeply), are two different realities. There is also the aspect of the totally selfish person, in which reality centers about him, as though the world revolved about him. Any act that touches this individual may be construed as an act for or against him, depending on how the individual interprets it. The awareness that other realities exist, can be helpful as data input into our decision-making. By attempting to find other realities of a situation, better data is then available for input into possible solutions.

A last aspect of the human situation, is needs. The individual is obviously not totally self-sufficient. He has needs, and these needs, if extreme enough, may influence decisions disproportionate to the overall situation. An example of this we see in our ordinary grocery shopping. The grocer would much rather have us come in to shop while we are hungry, rather than full. We need to be aware of the difference in "needed" items when we go shopping for groceries in different states of hunger or fullness. These immediate needs reflect a strong influence on us in this relatively unimportant situation. Other immediate needs affect us the same way in important issues where the temporary fulfilling of an immediate need is not a good solution

for the longer term. We should also be aware of the possibility that "the inner us" that wants that need fulfilled, has a tremendous ability to trigger rationalization to support a decision that satisfies that immediate need. If a need becomes great enough, it can overpower all other values, to the point of total compromise of all values. An awareness of our ability to do this may put the situation into a truer perspective, so that a decision that is better overall may be made.

There are certain social aspects of the human situation that we encounter in society daily, in which our choices are restricted. We can out and out be blackmailed, but this is seldom done. More often coercion occurs in three guises: 1) economic, 2) social, and 3) spiritual.

Limitations economically can come governmentally, from corporations (business), and privately. This lever, which is a choice compromiser, is somewhat dependent upon our material outlook. If we are relatively free of dependency upon materialism, the lever is small. There is a direct relationship between our dependency, and the lever.

Social coercion is the use of society's prestige (from exclusive clubs to differing degrees of recognition) as bait to influence us to act in accordance with others' desires. These "influences" may be only as effective as our weakness for compromising our values. As our need for recognition and status increases, the more tempting compromise becomes.

Last is spiritual coercion. This is where the individual is influenced through fear. A person's religion may become "the cattle prodder," in some situations. Fear of a fiery hell in the after life may alter behaviour. It becomes even more effective through guilt (discussed later). Society's and individuals' demands are felt by us, and do influence our decision-making.

Another limitation upon us, is guilt. Used effectively without our awareness, it can guide us like a robot. We may become so conditioned, that we (so to speak) "salivate as the bell is rung," similar to Pavlov's dog. It can be used effectively through friendship, religion, or relatives. We all have experienced it to certain degrees.

Time is the sixth element in the model. It may be looked at with respect to the individual, and with respect to the problem. Relative to the individual, immediate pressure may be a factor for speeding up a decision sooner than the individual may want. This can create a possible inadequate solution of the problem, because of lack of data. Katz and Kahn warn about immediate pressures, saying,

> The immediate pressures not only call attention to a problem; in many instances they also suggest a strategy of solution or even a specific solution.[24]

They continue,

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[24]Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn, *The Psychology of Organization* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 274.

Nevertheless, immediate pressures can lead to bypassing the necessary stages in problem-solving, either through the creation of a feeling of urgency or through the heavy weighting given a particular course of action by the forces creating the pressure.[25]

When looking at time with respect to the problem, long- and short-run consequences must be taken into consideration. The consequences for tomorrow might not necessarily be good for next year, or ten years from now. We have already discussed this earlier in this chapter.

Within this model, we have dealt with the outer situation and the inner person. Identifying the problem, and developing an objective analysis of the problem deals with the outer situation--facts, figures, reliable descriptions. Finding our principles, ultimate constants, looking at the human situation, immediate pressures, require looking into ourselves, our inner person.

Within the model there is a solid line from God's active love feeding into the solution and other parts of the model. These solid lines indicate there is a conscious effort by the individual to attain communication with God, as in prayer or meditation. By getting this communication, we may find God's will in coming up with a suitable solution. There are many directions we may go in solutions, especially in satisfying our own needs, which may not be beneficial in the long-run to either our values or personhood. Jumping too quickly into a solution, without realizing values lost or gained, is losing more available data. Openness to the whole and the ultimate in God may be

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[25]*Ibid.*, p. 276.

safeguards at these points.

Assuming now that all data is gathered, we must look for a solution. Finding all solutions, we need to make a choice as to which solution best fits the problem, our principles, the human situation, and other elements just discussed. These alternative options are indicated on the diagram as S_1, S_2, etc.

Choosing the most probable solution, more careful analysis must be made. This analysis should be an objective look at all we have put together. It should examine the consequences of the action to be taken--consequences on people, both for the long- and short-term. Does this solution serve the purpose for which it is designed? Does this solution fit in with our values? Will there be guilt because of consequences to the other party? Does what happens in the long-run fit in with the values we believe?

Again related here is God's active love. This is that love of God that is experienced by all people--whatever their religion. There is a definite unmeasurable active force (God's love) in the universe. This love has been defined by all people in many ways (including *agape*, ultimate goodness, mystical relationships, impact of total reality), yet all definitions are inadequate in letting others understand the experience of God's love. This force should also be recognized in the model. The solid lines from this universal force to principles, constants, human situation, and time, are direct continuing relationships that are active as long as the individual cares to continue the relationship. That force is always available. It can help

to upgrade values. There is also a solid line to "analysis of problem," and "analysis of solution." This love should be active also in both of these analyses.

A last note might be a question to ourselves as to how this solution is going to affect our relationship with God. Have we actively attempted to allow God to enter into our problem-solving session? If all this has been done and we gain an acceptable solution, we can initiate the solution, and the problem should then be solved.

A further suggestion for implementing the problem-solving process is to discipline ourselves to make up a worksheet (on those problems that are important to us) with the following questions:

1) What is the problem?

2) What data do I have available about this problem?

3) What are my principles with relation to this situation?

4) What ultimate constants are important?

5) What is the human situation, with respect to myself and to the other person(s)?

6) What time elements are involved with pressures on ourself, and long-run, short-run solutions to the problem?

7) What are all possible solutions?

8) What are the consequences:
   a) long-run, short-run?
   b) to my values?
   c) to the other person?
   d) to my relationship with God?

9) Which is the most acceptable solution?

10) Throughout the process, am I actively communicating with God?

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